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School Reform News

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PAIGE CALLS FOR MORE SCHOOL CHOICE

U.S. Education Secretary addresses Black Alliance in Philadelphia

BY GEORGE A. CLOWES

"It's a disgrace" that a country claiming to value education "hasn't powered it up with the energy of choice," declared U.S. Education Secretary Rod Paige, addressing the second annual meeting of the Black Alliance for Educational Options on February 28 at Symposium 2002 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

"This city is the shrine of American liberty and American independence, and there is no better place to celebrate the liberty and independence that educational options give to American families," said Paige. Like BAEO, Paige supports expanded parental choice through publicly funded vouchers, tuition tax credits and deductions, charter schools, open enrollment, home schooling, and private management of public schools.

The four-day BAEO Symposium was attended by approximately 600 school choice activists, parents, and educators from black communities around the country. Just 50 or so attended BAEO's first meeting four years ago. There now are 14 local BAEO chapters, with another 15 being formed.

That first BAEO meeting was called by former Milwaukee Public Schools Superintendent Howard Fuller, an education professor at Marquette University in Milwaukee. Frustrated by the frequent experience of finding "whites talking about African-Americans" at school reform conferences, Fuller spearheaded the formation of the national organization to give blacks a voice in the growing school choice movement.

"Our mission is to actively support parental choice to empower families and increase educational options for black children," said Fuller, adding that low-income parents of all ethnic groups—black, white, Latino, Asian, and Native American—"ought to have the right, the capacity, the power to send their children to the schools they feel will work best for them."

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What Should We Expect from Smaller Classes?

With all the pluses, how large should the gains be?

BY GEORGE A. CLOWES

Math Problem #1. If a teacher devotes 20 percent of class time to one-on-one instruction, in a class of 30 students, how much more time does the teacher have to spend with each student when the class size is reduced to 15? (You may use a calculator.)

Math Problem #2. If each student in a class of 30 disrupts the rest of the class an average of 2 percent of the time, how much uninterrupted learning time is left for teaching? How much is the learning time increased if (a) disruptions are reduced to 1 percent? (c) class size is reduced to 15? (You may use a spreadsheet program.)

While recognizing that "class-size reduction has lately gone from being a subject of primary academic interest to a policy juggernaut," a group of international researchers last November recommended legislators should consider lower-cost alternatives—such as attracting better teachers—"before they commit billions more on reducing classes across the board."

Just a month later, a new report on a reduced class-size intervention program for disadvantaged children in Wisconsin reaffirmed the critically important role teachers play in raising student achievement.

In a thoughtful review of studies of class size and academic performance in last November's *Scientific American*, Ronald G. Ehrenberg, Dominic J. Brewer, Adam Gamoran, and J. Douglas Willms point out class-size reduction has one obvious drawback: "It costs plenty." They note the state of California alone has spent more than $1.5 billion annually over the past several years to reduce class sizes to 20 or fewer in kindergarten through third grade ... with only a "tiny effect."

SMALLER continued on page 12

Three Bush administration leaders—Secretary of Education Rod Paige, First Lady Laura Bush, and Second Lady Lynne Cheney—show their support for education reform at a recent White House Summit on Early Childhood Learning.

Math Skills Become "Fuzzy" After Teaching Reforms

Skills without understanding being replaced by understanding without skills

BY ROBERT HOLLAND

Do the new methods of teaching mathematics advanced by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM):

(a) help all children gain a conceptual understanding of math so they can be creative problem-solvers? or

(b) harmfully de-emphasize mastery of the basic skills so students lack a foundation from which to advance to higher reasoning?

A forum at the American Enterprise Institute recently brought together the proponents of those divergent views for a spirited two-hour discussion. AEI Senior Fellow Lynne V. Cheney, the nation's Second Lady, set the stage for debate with an exhibit from what she called "an NCTM-inspired math program called Mathland." This was the problem students were to solve:

"I just checked out a library book that is 1,344 pages long. The book is due in three weeks. How many pages will I need to read a day to finish the book in time?"

Taught according to traditional math, most adults would use the long-division algorithm to divide 1,344 by 21. However, noted Mrs. Cheney, students today often are not taught long division and are encouraged to invent their own solutions. In this case, Mathland lauded the student who solved the problem by adding up 21s until reaching 1,344. Mrs. Cheney held up a large poster showing how the student laboriously added all those 21s.

While proponents of NCTM math contend that encouraging such student inventiveness promotes understanding, many parents worry that "students who learn mathematics in this way will never perform mathematical

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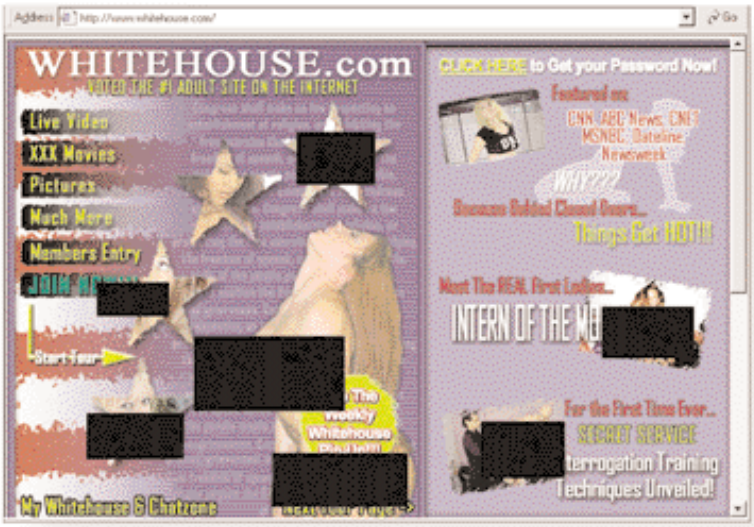

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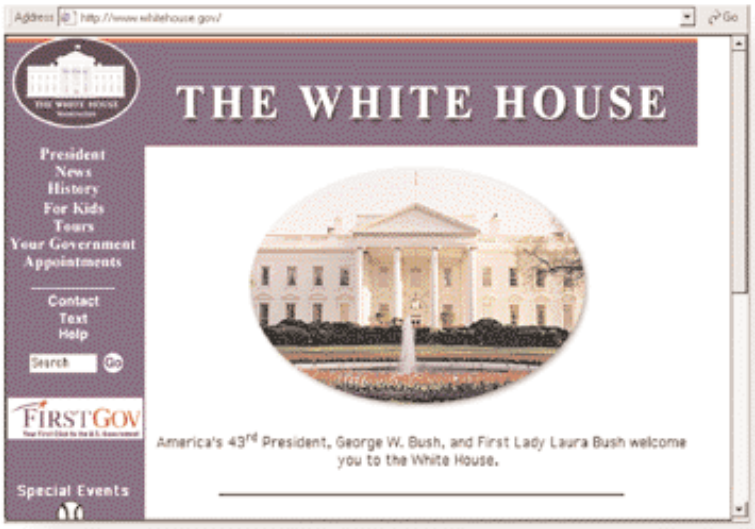

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EDITORIAL OFFICES

The Heartland Institute
19 South LaSalle, Suite 903
Chicago, Illinois 60603
312/377-4000 voice • 312/377-5000 fax
e-mail think@heartland.org

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PUBLISHER
Nikki Saret

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Diane Carol Bast

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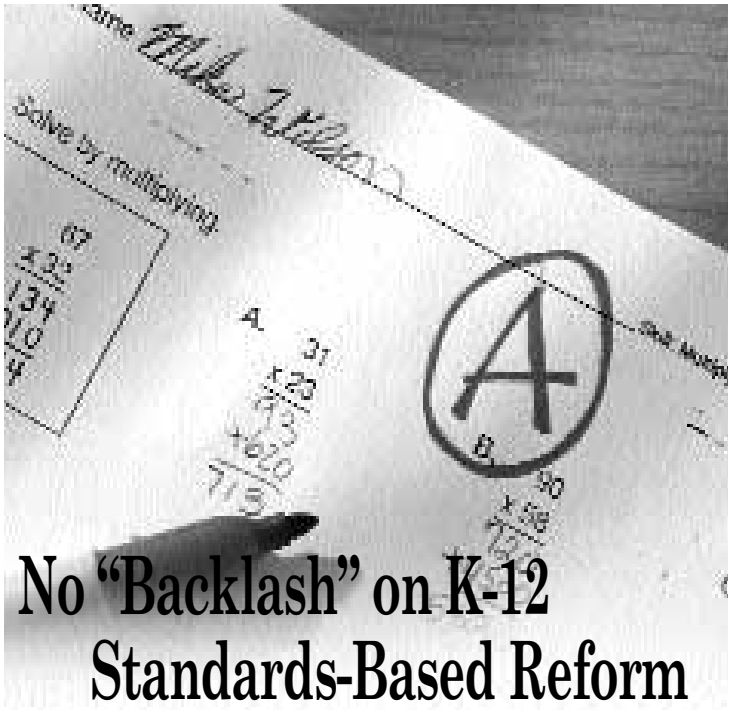

No "Backlash" on K-12 Standards-Based Reform

But employers and colleges still dissatisfied with recent graduates

BY KELLY AMIS

The latest "reality check" on the standards-based reform movement, recently released by Public Agenda in conjunction with *Education Week*, confirms that the notion of a standards "backlash" has been greatly exaggerated.

Students, teachers, and parents seem to be settling into the "new status quo" of rigorous standards and testing regimes with relative ease. However, the success of these reforms has not yet been perceived by those who work with recent high school graduates.

Public Agenda President Deborah Wadsworth concluded there is "impressive support for moving ahead with the standards movement," even though its impact on student achievement is not yet clear.

"Seven in 10 [college professors and employers] say the graduates they encounter have only 'fair' or 'poor' skills in grammar, spelling, and writing; and six in 10 say the same holds true for basic math."

"Despite some glimmers of hope, the high levels of dissatisfaction among employers and professors—who are in many ways the ultimate 'consumers' of K-12 education—are disheartening," Wadsworth said.

"Reality Check 2002" is the fifth annual survey performed by Public Agenda to assess the nation's progress in implementing standards-based reforms, an effort that will soon be heightened when strong testing and accountability measures from the No Child Left Behind Act, signed into law in January by President George W. Bush, take hold.

Students Can "Handle It"

While policymakers continue to grapple with creating and aligning the three elements of standards-based reform—academic standards, tests, and measures to hold districts, schools, and teachers accountable for student performance—those closest to reforms seem to be taking them in stride.

A stunning 95 percent of public middle and high school students surveyed said that, with regard to taking tests, they either do not get nervous or do "but handle it," and 79 percent say they think standardized test questions are generally fair. Similarly, 82 percent of students say the academic expectations in their schools are "about right."

While more than eight in 10 parents prefer that teacher evaluations be used in conjunction with standardized tests, the same number believe "students work harder if they know that they will have to pass a test for promotion or graduation." The vast majority of parents also support testing younger students to help identify those who need special assistance in the early years.

Teachers express slightly more concern with standards-based reform, but "are largely untroubled by testing's impact in their own classroom," according to the survey. Less than 2 percent of all the groups surveyed would like to stop the effort toward higher standards.

Enough to Get By

But are standards-based reforms motivating students and improving their academic achievement? Unfortunately no, according to students and the adults who work with them after high school graduation.

Seven of 10 students surveyed say "most students do the bare minimum to get by," and nearly half say "some kids graduate even though they haven't learned what they are supposed to." Likewise, nearly half of parents and teachers report their schools still "have a serious problem with too many students who get passed through the system without learning."

Students affirm they have not experienced much in the way of higher standards for graduating in particular. In 1999, 52 percent of students said they had to pass an exit exam to graduate; in 2002, slightly less (49 percent) said they did. Similarly, 56 percent of today's teachers report test scores "are not part of the decision" of which students are promoted at their school, and 39 percent say scores are used "only in part."

The inability of standards-based reform to help ensure high school graduates are possessed of basic skills—at least so far—is clearly perceived by college professors and employers.

For the fifth straight year, these groups express profound disappointment with the preparedness of high school graduates. Seven in 10 of them say the graduates they encounter have only "fair" or "poor" skills in grammar, spelling, and writing; and six in 10 say the same holds true for basic math. Graduates' work habits—such as "being organized and on time"—also receive poor marks from a strong majority of employers (69 percent) and professors (74 percent).

"[M]ore than eight in 10 parents... believe 'students work harder if they know that they will have to pass a test for promotion or graduation.'"

Only 16 percent of employers and 24 percent of professors say they notice an improvement in the quality of high school seniors they have encountered in recent years. Slightly more—39 percent of employers and 31 percent of professors—say they regard a high school diploma as evidence a student has mastered basic skills.

Public Agenda notes that another of its 2002 surveys found that only 20 percent of high school teachers believe the students in their schools "learn to speak and write well, with proper pronunciation and grammar." One other study may help explain why: In its 1997 report, "Different Drummers: How Teachers of Teachers View Public Education," Public Agenda found only 19 percent of education professors believed it was "absolutely essential" to produce teachers who "stress correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation" for their students.

In contrast to the low marks they are receiving for basic skills, today's high school graduates seem to have much less difficulty mastering computer technology. Seventy percent of employers and 81 percent of college professors say graduates have "good" or "excellent" skills in this area.

"Reality Check 2002," funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts and the GE Fund, was based on telephone calls made during one month in 2001 to national, randomly selected samples. Complete results of the "Reality Check" surveys from 1998 to 2002 will be made available later this year.

Kelly Amis, former program director for The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, is now president of Education Allies, a new nonprofit organization that provides research and advisory services to education donors. Her email address is KLAmis@aol.com.

Errata: Incorrect data labels were posted on Figure 2 on page 9 of the March 2002 issue of *School Reform News* ("Catholic Schools Achieve High Marks at Low Cost"). The correct labels, reading from left to right, are: 63% and 72%; 55% and 72%; and 53% and 62%. *School Reform News* regrets the error.

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Questions for Choice Opponents

"America already has created the greatest voucher program in history," said U.S. Education Secretary Rod Paige in a February 28 speech to the Black Alliance for Educational Options in Philadelphia. "It was stupendously successful. No one minds its support for private and religious schools. It is called the GI Bill."

Paige pointed out that his Department's budget includes both Pell Grant funding for college students and Title I funding for K-12 students. Since federal aid gives college students choices, he argued, there's no reason why federal aid shouldn't also give first-graders choices. He suggested asking defenders of the status quo the following questions:

"Choice is all around us—even in federal aid for college students—and it is time to bring it to the children."

ROD PAIGE
U.S. SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

- "Are you opposed to the Pell Grant system?"
- "Do you think the Department of Education should pick a college for every college student?"
- "Shouldn't everyone go to the college closest to home?"
- "Isn't it unfair to help a student go to a private university?"
- "If the university has a chapel, and its students get federal Pell Grants, doesn't that violate the separation of church and state?"
- "Aren't Pell Grants a way to abandon the state university system and drain money and bright students away from it?"

"Choice is all around us—even in federal aid for college students—and it is time to bring it to the children," Paige declared.

PAIGE continued from page 1

It's not an issue of public versus private schools, explained Kaleem Caire, BAEO's president and CEO. "It's whether the school is meeting the child's educational needs or not. When dollars follow the child to school, parents have the option of leaving if their child's needs aren't being met."

Secretary Paige related how, as superintendent of the Houston Independent School District, he had provided parents with more choices by creating charter schools and starting a program to let children in low-performing schools take their share of school tuition—some $3,750 a year—to a private school. That expansion of parental choice strengthened public education rather than hurt it, he said, noting choice "is an expectation" in other aspects of life in the twenty-first century.

"Americans control their environments through choice from the moment their favorite radio station wakes them up, through a day of reading and driving and eating what they choose, until they watch a video movie of their choice before going to a bed that is just the right size," explained Paige.

But the "glaring exception" for most people is when they send their children to school, he noted. After picking out their child's clothes, book-bags, haircuts, and doctors, "some big bureaucracy" makes decisions about their child's school. Parents aren't excited by this, many don't understand it, but others—like BAEO—want to change the system to give everyone choice.

"You are the prophets of parental choice," Paige told the Symposium attendees. "You have a great American message. Preach it boldly."

No one preached more boldly than Fuller when he addressed a criticism from other black leaders—who oppose parental choice—that BAEO doesn't represent the interests of the black community.

"Who made them kings?" he asked, conjuring up the deferential subject-monarch model the assembled delegates of the Continental Congress had rejected in the same city 226 years earlier. There comes a time in history, said Fuller, when people have to decide whose side they are on: the side of those who believe low-income parents do not have the capacity to make decisions for themselves, or the side of those who believe they do.

"How can our opponents claim they are on the side of the people when they are afraid to empower the people?" he asked. "Since when is it in the interest of low-income parents not to have control over the allocation and distribution of money?"

"How can our opponents claim they are on the side of the people when they are afraid to empower the people? Since when is it in the interest of low-income parents not to have control over the allocation and distribution of money?"

HOWARD FULLER

Fuller also raised the question of who had "decided" that vouchers and other forms of school choice were right-wing issues.

"You know who decided it," he told the Symposium attendees: "The people who stand for the status quo, the ones who have mis-educated and undereducated our children for years."

Speakers at the Symposium included two Philadelphia Democrats, State Representative Dwight Evans and State Senator Anthony Hardy Williams, who both helped establish charter schools in the city. In 1998, the Philadelphia teacher union unsuccessfully targeted Evans for defeat because of his support of school vouchers and for his role in crafting the bill permitting the state to take control of the city's public schools.

Mystery: What Makes a Good Teacher?

Since good teachers have a profound effect on student achievement, the solution to improving student achievement would appear to be blindingly obvious: Get more good teachers. But, as Dan Goldhaber points out, there's just one problem with implementing that solution: "We really don't know what makes a good teacher."

"The teacher characteristics that we can measure—experience, education level, certification status, and so on—explain only 3 percent of the differences in student achievement that are attributable to their teachers' influence," notes Goldhaber, a senior research associate with the Urban Institute in Washington, DC. He tackles "The Mystery of Good Teaching" in the Spring 2002 issue of *Education Next*, a quarterly publication of the Hoover Institution at Stanford University.

Other topics on teachers and teacher quality in this latest issue are:

- Should education schools lose their monopoly? A debate among Mary E. Diez, James W. Fraser, and Frederick M. Hess.
- The performance of teachers from the Teach for America program, by Margaret Raymond and Stephen Fletcher.
- Alternative teacher certification, by David Ruenzel.

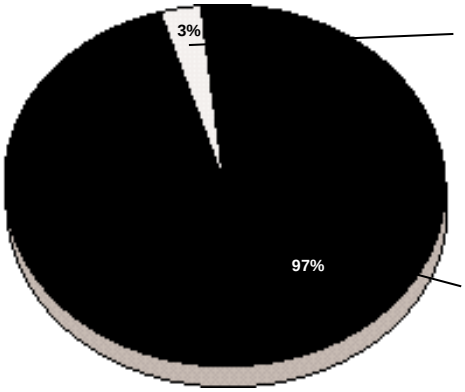
In the same issue, Stanford University political scientist Terry Moe raises questions about the objectivity of the annual Phi Delta Kappa survey of attitudes of the American public towards education. Moe argues "PDK's polls have purposely been designed to reflect negatively on the voucher issue." He explains how a neutrally worded question about vouchers was dropped and replaced with a question whose wording was more apt to bring a negative response.

Education Next *is sponsored by the Program on Education Policy and Governance at Harvard University, the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, and the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research. It is available online at* www.educationnext.org.

ELUSIVE QUALITIES

% OF TEACHERS' INFLUENCE ATTRIBUTABLE TO VARIOUS CHARACTERISTICS

The teacher characteristics that we can measure—experience, education level, certification status, and so on—only explain 3 percent of the differences in student achievement that are attributable to their teachers' influence.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November Initiatives Target Bilingual Education

Reform efforts gear up in Massachusetts and Colorado

BY DON SOIFER

Statewide ballot initiatives in Massachusetts and Colorado this November will seek to eliminate bilingual education programs and replace them with one-year English immersion plans.

Meanwhile, in California—which passed the first such law in 1998—the appointed state Board of Education in March abandoned its efforts to impose new regulations that would have stripped a key provision of Proposition 227, the bilingual reform law.

Massachusetts Legislature Holds Lively Reform Hearing

Facing increased pressure as a result of the pending referendum, the education committees of both houses of the Massachusetts Legislature held a hearing on March 13 to discuss three proposed alternatives. The first, from Republican Governor Jane Swift, would place a two-year limit on the amount of time students can spend in bilingual programs.

A second measure, proposed by State Rep. Antonio Cabral (D-New Bedford), amounts to little more than an endorsement of the current system with some improved accountability. A third, endorsed as a compromise measure by the chairmen of the two education committees, State Senator Robert Antonioni (D-Leominster) and State Rep. Peter Larkin (D-Pittsfield), would set a three-year time limit as well as increase accountability.

"Right now, there isn't any accountability," said Larkin.

State Senator Guy W. Glodis (D-Worcester), one of the ballot initiative's most prominent supporters, called the proposed compromise "nothing more than a bureaucratic machination intended as a rubber stamp of the status quo." He added, "How can we possibly expect to help these students when we maintain a horribly failing system? In the absence of a more effective legislative proposal, we will let the people of the Commonwealth decide for themselves in November." Republican whip Mary Rogeness (R-Longmeadow) discussed her support for the referendum on a local radio program.

The statehouse hearing lasted eight hours and featured a number of spirited exchanges. Lawmakers heard testimony from Ron Unz, author of the California law and a key leader in both the Massachusetts and Colorado movements, as well as bilingual education supporters, including state AFL-CIO President Robert Haynes.

John Silber, the chancellor of Boston University and former chairman of the Massachusetts Board of Education, gave his forceful endorsement to the ballot initiative. "The present system ... traps students in classes where they never develop fluency in English," he said.

Colorado Campaign Gains Momentum

The proposed ballot initiative in Colorado also generated increased interest. A survey by the Denver *Rocky Mountain News* in February found 68 percent of voters favored the proposal, with only 26 percent opposed and 7 percent undecided.

Meanwhile, two former Denver School Board members announced their support for "English for the Children of Colorado" at a rally on the steps of the state capitol. The former members, Laura Lefkowits and Lynn Coleman, both pointed to failures in the state's current bilingual programs.

Ballot language was approved for two different versions of the measure by the state title-setting board in December. Reform leaders are now waiting for an expected state supreme court ruling before collecting the signatures necessary to place the measure on the November ballot. An eleventh-hour ruling by that court prevented a similar initiative from appearing on the 2000 ballot.

California School Board Backs Down

As these and other movements to bring meaningful reform of bilingual education move forward across the nation, the California school board recently announced it was considering drastic new regulations that would have gutted the 1998 bilingual reforms mandated by Proposition 227. Supporters of those reforms, led by Ron Unz, responded vigorously and threatened a lawsuit, prompting the board to drop the controversial proposals.

Proposition 227 explicitly provides for parental exceptions allowing English learners to remain in bilingual education—but only when a child's parent makes such a request in person at the school. And even then, such waivers are permitted only in certain circumstances, namely for older or special-needs children, or for those who already possess above-average English language skills. The proposed regulations would have given teachers and school officials the authority to grant such "parental exceptions" unilaterally.

"I am very glad the board now admits that their position last month was completely illegal and they have backtracked on that," Unz told the *San Diego Union-Tribune*.

New Study Illuminates Value of California Reforms

The reforms set in motion by the 1998 California law are the focus of a new study by Boston University Professor Christine Rossell. Her paper, "Dismantling Bilingual Education, Implementing English Immersion: The California Initiative," analyzes how California school districts have complied with Proposition 227, pointing to both troubling trends and reasons for optimism.

Prior to the law's passage, the study notes, 40 percent of California's English learners were enrolled in bilingual education. That number dropped sharply, to approximately 15 percent, in the 1998-99 school year that followed approval of Proposition 227, and it has remained relatively unchanged at that level. Rossell cites this as one significant reason for the widely reported gains in test scores for California's English learners, which occurred after the law was passed.

The paper also notes that while only three-quarters of English learners were tested prior to the new law, that number rose to 84 percent in the 2000-01 school year. The law requires that all English learners be tested.

The strong gains made by California's English learners in reading, math, and language skills have been widely reported for the third straight year following Proposition 227. The improvements have been most impressive among younger students, but the state's lowest-performing English learners have also improved at a substantial rate.

Rossell reports numerous inconsistencies in how school districts have complied with the law. She describes some prominent cases, like San Francisco, where school districts simply defied it outright. The lack of compliance with the 1998 law documented in this study, particularly in the San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Jose, and Oakland school districts, remains a cause for serious concern.

Yet in light of what seems at times to be an outright lack of compliance in several of California's major school districts, the widely reported gains by English learners statewide are even more impressive.

Don Soifer is executive vice president of the Lexington Institute in Arlington, Virginia. His email address is soifer@lexingtoninstitute.org.

For more information…

WWW "Dismantling Bilingual Education, Implementing English Immersion: The California Initiative," written by Christine H. Rossell and issued by the Public Policy Institute of California on February 20, is available online at **http://web.bu.edu/POLISCI/CROSSELL/CRossell.html.**

Don Soifer's January 2002 paper, "Bilingual Education: An Annual Report," can be obtained free of charge by emailing mail@lexingtoninstitute.org.

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Smaller Classes No Remedy for Poor Teachers

Structured lessons give teachers more time for individual students

BY GEORGE A. CLOWES

For the second year running, a reduced class-size intervention program for disadvantaged K-3 children in Wisconsin has yielded significant findings that demonstrate the critical role explicit teaching techniques and structured classroom management play in raising student achievement.

These findings come from the most recent evaluation of the Student Achievement Guarantee in Education program, SAGE, a statewide effort to increase the academic achievement of children living in poverty by means of a four-point intervention plan:

- reducing the student-teacher ratio in grades K-3 to 15:1;
- implementing a rigorous academic curriculum;
- providing before- and after-school activities; and
- implementing professional development and accountability plans.

"Barak Rosenshine has likened this approach to a 'learning funnel,' where the teacher narrowly focuses student attention with explicit instruction at the start of a new learning area, but then widens that focus as learning progresses."

The experimental program was launched in the 1996-97 school year. Ongoing evaluations are directed by Alex Molnar with a research team from the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Their new report, "2000-2001 Evaluation of the SAGE Program," was issued last December.

The SAGE evaluators, struck earlier by marked differences in achievement levels in different reduced-size classrooms, interviewed and observed teachers in higher- and lower-achieving SAGE classrooms in second and third grade. They found that teaching style is the major feature separating a good teacher from a poor one.

"The primary teaching method of the higher-achieving teachers is explicit instruction," report the evaluators. "The teachers give clear directions, explain concepts, model procedures, require practice, provide feedback, and scaffold [provide temporary support for] understanding."

Although the higher-achieving teachers "also engage their students in more experiential learning consisting of authentic tasks, challenging problems, and interesting materials," they do so only after establishing a learning foundation of newly acquired basic knowledge and skills. The latter process always takes precedence over experiential learning.

University of Illinois education psychologist Barak Rosenshine has likened this approach to a "learning funnel," where the teacher narrowly focuses student attention with explicit instruction at the start of a new learning area, but then widens that focus as learning progresses. As the learning process establishes an ever-broader and increasingly complex foundation of knowledge and skills, students are prompted to think creatively with more experiential learning techniques. (See this month's interview, page 10.)

The lessons of higher-achieving SAGE teachers consist of "carefully planned activities with clear goals, logical structure, and step-by-step content progression." The lessons are fast-paced, presented with enthusiasm, and tightly focused so there are few digressions from the teaching goal. Because of this tight control, class time available for learning is maximized, not inadvertently wasted. "Teachers have more time to devote to individual students."

Not only do higher-achieving teachers give more attention to individual students, they give this added attention in a very specific way: "in the form of direct instruction related to foundational learning."

In sharp contrast, the management structure used by teachers in lower-achieving classrooms reduces the time available for instruction. These teachers do not organize their classrooms in an efficient and effective manner; they tend to be more permissive in managing students; and their lessons often appear randomly sequenced.

"Rather than create more instructional time, their management actions caused less time to be available for instruction," the researchers concluded after careful observation of six teachers in five lower-achieving classrooms.

Similar findings were reported from an evaluation of first-grade SAGE classrooms last year. While more effective first-grade teachers focused on the acquisition of important knowledge and skills, using explicit instructional methods, the less-effective teachers stressed more personal goals and used indirect teaching methods. The more effective teachers carefully organized and sequenced lessons in a structured classroom environment; the less-effective teachers had more randomly structured lessons and a more permissive management style. (See "Study: Student-Centered Learning Ineffective," *School Reform News*, July 2001.)

However, a major difference noted in this new evaluation is that even though many of the lower-achieving second- and third-grade teachers focused on academic achievement, their ability to sustain that focus was limited by their management skills. In addition, some of the lower-achieving teachers presented lessons that were "slow and dull," many "lacked enthusiasm and diligence," and "an expectation that all students will achieve was often not evident."

The contrast with the higher-achieving classrooms could not be greater. There, "lessons proceed at a brisk pace. Diversions ... are exceptions... Further, the lessons are often presented with enthusiasm, energy, and a commitment to accomplishment."

Class Size Effect

In this latest analysis, evaluators reported that the net effect of placing a child in a SAGE classroom is to increase the child's test score in first grade, widen that advantage in second grade, and then have the advantage fall to its lowest level in third grade.

It is important to note, however, that the SAGE classroom is not only a classroom with fewer students per teacher, but also with three other intervention advantages: a rigorous curriculum, before- and after-school programs, and a professional staff development program.

When teachers have fewer students in class, they can—in theory—spend more time attending to the needs of each individual student and thus increase student achievement. The amount of increased time is often substantial. In this latest evaluation, SAGE classrooms had an average of 14.27 students per teacher, compared to an average of 22.73 per teacher in control classrooms. Compared to the control classrooms, the SAGE classrooms have 59.3 percent more time available for one-on-one interaction between an individual student and a SAGE teacher.

The evaluators call this focus on individual students "individualization." All reduced class-size teachers focus on individual students, they report, adding that "The major effect of reduced class size is increased individualization."

But a different conclusion emerges on reading the evaluation report's 73 pages of teacher interviews. In the higher-achieving classrooms, most of the teachers clearly are not teaching the smaller classes any differently than they would have taught larger classes. However, the smaller classes allow them to do *more* of what their teaching style already aims for: an integration of individualized instruction in daily lessons.

In the lower-achieving classrooms, too, most of the teachers clearly are not teaching the smaller classes any differently than they would have taught larger classes. Regardless of class size, these teachers seem to have little interest in focusing attention on individual students, as the following examples show.

"Regardless of student interest, understanding, or energy level, classes proceeded the same, with [Teacher] L3 instructing slowly and methodically and students responding when called upon. ... Observations showed that L3 did not individualize during class time."

"[Teacher L4's] preference [was] to spread out a minimum amount of student learning over a long period of time. ... When L4 talks about individualization, she means dividing students into groups according to ability."

"[Before school, Teacher] L5A works with several very low readers. She described them as eager to stay with her to work hard to raise their reading scores. When observed during that period, however, they sat with nothing to do while she posted papers on the walls."

These latest SAGE results are likely to prompt the same question from policymakers that Mike Antonucci of the Education Intelligence Agency raised after evaluators first reported on the importance of teaching style: "Why not implement the inexpensive instructional reform first, in the larger classrooms, then observe the effects of class-size reduction on the margins?"

Since teacher certification advocates stress the critical importance of having teachers who have been trained to teach, a recent *USA Today* editorial is likely to prompt a more fundamental question: Why do "education schools refuse to teach effective instructional techniques"?

For more information...

WWW The 2000-01 SAGE report is available at the Web site of the Center for Education Research, Analysis, and Innovation in the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee: **http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/CERAI/sage.html.**

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Cleveland Parents Don't Choose Voucher Schools, Say Opponents

Claim state pays money directly to religious schools

BY GEORGE A. CLOWES

Who are you going to believe, me or your own eyes?

Chico Marx: Duck Soup

Opponents of parental choice in education have deployed a wide range of arguments at various times and places to persuade voters and legislators to reject school vouchers as a public school reform strategy. On February 20, 2002—with just 30 minutes of oral argument before the U.S. Supreme Court—they were forced to pick their best argument.

Reduced to its essence, that best argument was as surprising as it was simple: *You* may see parents choosing schools, but *we* see a direct transfer of funds from the state to religious schools.

Background

The Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Program offers low-income Cleveland families a voucher worth up to $2,250 per child to use for tuition at secular or religious private schools, and at participating suburban public schools. Voucher schools receive public funds only after parents have chosen a school and signed over voucher funds to the school.

Robert H. Chanin, legal counsel for respondents Doris Simmons-Harris et al., explained the strict requirements the U.S. Supreme Court has established for determining whether a transfer of public money from the state to a religious institution is unconstitutional.

"If public money that is reasonably attributable to the State is used to pay for a religious education, it violates the Constitution," he said. The only way the money is not attributable to the state, he continued, is if there is some "intervening party" to "break the circuit" between the state and the religious institution.

If there is "an independent party with decision-making" authority standing between the state and the schools, then the money is not going to the religious institution "by virtue of a State action or a State decision." A transfer under such circumstances does not violate the Constitution.

But, Chanin contended, in the Cleveland case, "[t]here is no intervening party with decision-making [authority]." The parents, he argued, "play a ritualistic role in the transmission process" because the lack of voucher-accepting secular schools in Cleveland means 99 of 100 choices would be to send the child to a religious school. In effect, the only choice under these circumstances is "to stay in the public schools or go into a religious school."

Surprising Admission

Chanin, who also is general counsel for the nation's largest teacher union, the National Education Association, granted it is constitutional for money to go to nonsectarian schools but was non-committal when pressed by the Court to say what mix of religious and secular schools he would regard as constitutional.

Finally, he was asked to respond to the following situation: What if the money is given to the individuals, and the individuals had an equal choice between church-related schools and private ones to break the circuit?

"My response to that is, if this Court concluded that the words, significant amount, huge array of choices, if the Court concluded, as an abstract proposition, that those standards were met on 50-50, *I would be most unhappy, but I would conclude that the program was constitutional*," Chanin admitted [emphasis added].

"[G]ive me the rationale," asked the Court.

"We need to break the circuit," said Chanin.

"[The petitioners] say it does, so why doesn't it?" asked the Court.

"I'd say, *I don't accept what they tell me*," insisted Chanin [emphasis added].

Chanin's insistence that the parents of Cleveland's voucher children play no role in their choice of schools gave him a basis to pursue several arguments that otherwise would not be germane. Most importantly, by describing the Cleveland voucher program as involving a direct transfer of funds from the state to

CLEVELAND continued on next page

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U.S. Supreme Court Precedents

In *Committee v. Nyquist* (1973) the U.S. Supreme Court held states cannot provide targeted financial aid to religious schools, either by paying grants directly to the schools or through the parents with a tuition reimbursement program. To stay within the constraints of the First Amendment, the state must maintain an attitude of "neutrality," neither "advancing" nor "inhibiting" religion, the Court ruled.

A decade later, in *Mueller v. Allen* (1983), the Court held a tuition deduction program was constitutional since the program was offered neutrally to all parents, whether their children attended public schools or sectarian or nonsectarian private schools. Even though 96 percent of the financial benefits flowed to parochial schools, that occurred only as a result of decisions of individual parents, not at the behest of the state.

"Aid to parochial schools is permissible if it is 'allocated on the basis of neutral, secular criteria that neither favor nor disfavor religion, and is made available to both religious and secular beneficiaries...'"

JUSTICE SANDRA DAY O'CONNOR
AGOSTINI V. FELTON (1997)

In *Witters v. Washington* (1985), the Court ruled a recipient of state financial aid may use that aid at a religious educational institution of his or her choice not just for secular courses but even for training to become a religious minister. The aid program itself "is in no way skewed towards religion," said the Court, "and creates no financial incentive for students who undertake sectarian education." However, in the same year, the Court ruled in *Aguilar v. Felton* (1985) that sending public school teachers to religious schools to provide remedial education and counseling is unconstitutional.

Since then, the Court has backed away from its *Aguilar* decision. In *Zobrest* (1993), the Court held that the Catalina Foothills School District does not violate the Establishment Clause by furnishing a sign-language interpreter to a deaf child in a sectarian school.

The Court overturned *Aguilar* in *Agostini v. Felton* (1997), ruling that having public school teachers provide supplemental, remedial instruction to disadvantaged students in religious schools does not violate the Establishment Clause. Writing for the Court, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor said aid to parochial schools is permissible if it is "allocated on the basis of neutral, secular criteria that neither favor nor disfavor religion, and is made available to both religious and secular beneficiaries on a non-discriminatory basis."

Most recently, in *Mitchell v. Helms* (2000), the Court ruled Chapter 2 of the Education and Consolidation and Improvement Act of 1981 does not violate the Establishment Clause when it provides educational equipment to religious schools with taxpayer money. To meet constitutional muster, the federal aid must be distributed on a neutral per-pupil basis to all students in all schools, both public and private, secular and religious.

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CLEVELAND continued from previous page

religious schools, he was able to suggest that the Court's frame of reference in the case was *Nyquist* rather than *Mueller*. In the *Nyquist* case, the Court struck down a program to provide direct aid to parochial schools, while in *Mueller* the Court upheld a tuition tax deduction program where 96 percent of the benefits accrued to religious schools.

"[Robert] Chanin, who also is general counsel for ... the National Education Association, granted it is constitutional for money to go to nonsectarian schools but was non-committal when pressed by the Court to say what mix of religious and secular schools he would regard as constitutional."

Also, by using *Nyquist* as a frame of reference, Chanin was able to provide a plausible response to persistent questions from different members of the Court about other school choices available to Cleveland parents.

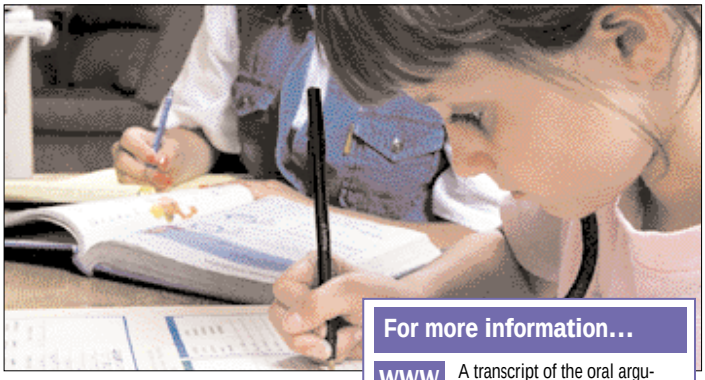
"Why do you not put the community schools and the magnet schools in the universe of choices?" Justice Kennedy asked. "That's the problem I'm having with your arguments. You say the figures are skewed, but they're skewed only because you will not look at those choices. Why?"

Chanin responded that the Court, in its *Nyquist* ruling on direct aid to religious schools, had provided a rationale for not going beyond the consideration of the program itself. To do so would allow a program "to do precisely what the Establishment Clause prohibits, which is to use tuition grants to pay totally for private, sectarian religious education," explained Chanin, adding, "the Court said."

"Ohio Did it Right"

Judith L. French, assistant attorney general for the State of Ohio, responded to Chanin's arguments in the four minutes she had reserved for rebuttal. The respondents, she commented, seemed to want the state to exclude the religious schools as an option—despite the Court's directive that the state "can neither inhibit nor advance religion."

"[I]t appears that respondents have either ignored or do not accept the last 20 years or so of this Court's jurisprudence," said French, noting the Court had expressly rejected each of the legal principles respondents had raised.



"Under this Court's decisions, especially *Mueller*, *Witters*, and *Zobrest*, and in light of this Court's teachings, most recently in *Agostini* and *Mitchell*, the Ohio program is constitutional because it offers a neutral program that offers true private choice to parents," she had pointed out in her opening statement.

Faced by an educational crisis with competing and conflicting considerations, and needing to solve it quickly, it seems that "Ohio did it right," said French. "It didn't take too much money away from the public schools, but gave enough for a limited program that is targeted to the most needy, the poorest of the poor, the low-income students who would not otherwise have choice."

With that, she called on the Court to overturn the decision of the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals and uphold the Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Program.

For more information...

WWW A transcript of the oral arguments made before the United States Supreme Court in the case of *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris* on February 20, 2002, is available at the Children First America Web site at **www.childrenfirstamerica.org/zelman.pdf.**

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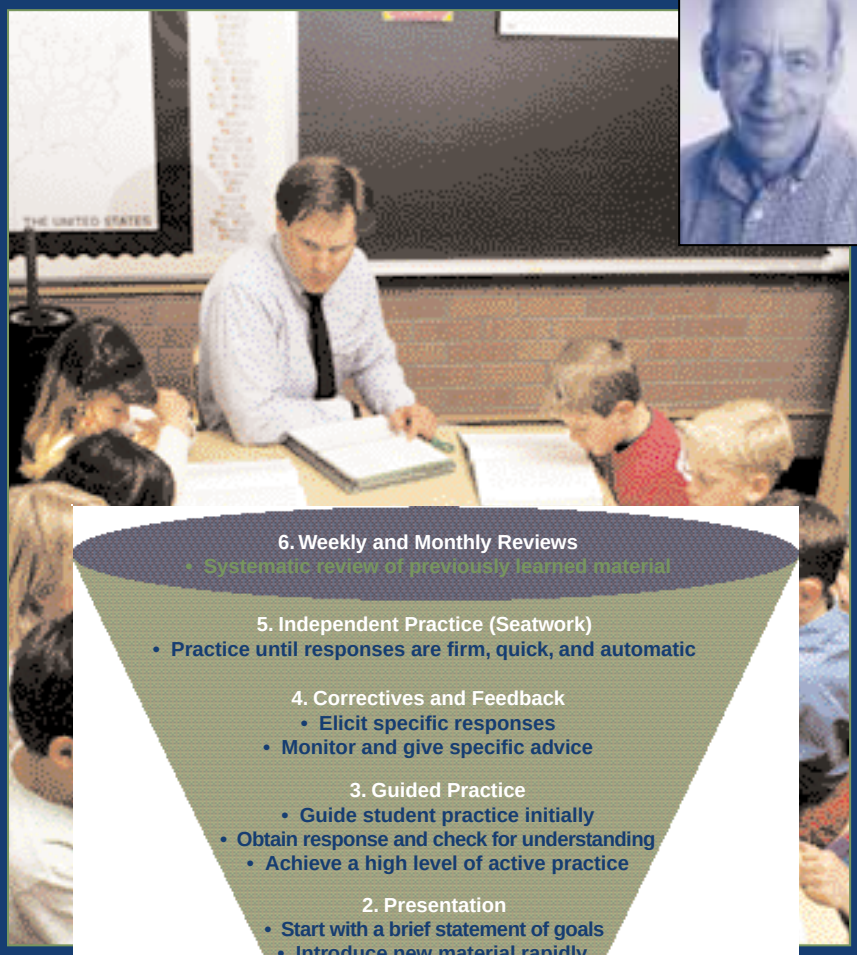
What Characterizes an Effective Teacher?



6. Weekly and Monthly Reviews
• Systematic review of previously learned material
5. Independent Practice (Seatwork)
• Practice until responses are firm, quick, and automatic
4. Correctives and Feedback
• Elicit specific responses
• Monitor and give specific advice
3. Guided Practice
• Guide student practice initially
• Obtain response and check for understanding
• Achieve a high level of active practice
2. Presentation
• Start with a brief statement of goals
• Introduce new material rapidly, but in small steps
• Demonstrate, illustrate, and provide concrete examples
1. Daily Review
• Review prerequisite skills

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disconnected facts obviously isn't the way to produce an educated child. But do we know if today's student-centered "discovery learning" classrooms perform any better than those of Dickens' day?

In fact, we do know a great deal about the effectiveness of different instructional methods, thanks to the work of education psychologist and researcher Barak Rosenshine over the past three decades.

Rosenshine first made his mark in research on teacher performance just a year after joining the faculty at the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana in 1971. He and Norma Furst identified the five characteristics of teacher

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oped a six-function teaching model to describe the necessary sequence of instructional steps that are involved in having a student learn new skills (see figure).

Rosenshine, an accomplished marathon runner, earned an undergraduate degree in psychology at the University of Chicago in 1957 and was awarded a Ph.D. in educational psychology from Stanford University in 1968. He was on the faculty at Temple University from 1966 to 1970, before joining the faculty at the University of Illinois, where he is now Professor Emeritus in the Department of Educational Psychology. Rosenshine recently spoke with *School Reform News* Managing Editor George Clowes.

AN INTERVIEW WITH BARAK ROSENSHINE
by George A. Clowes

"[H]igher-achieving teachers use explicit teaching first and then use experiential learning only after *students have developed a firm grasp of the new knowledge. I used to talk about this years ago as a funnel, where, when you're starting, you do the basic instruction and then, as the children get better, you expand it and open it up."*

CLOWES: How did you become involved in research on learning instruction?

ROSENSHINE: I started out as a high school teacher, teaching U.S. history for six years before going to graduate school at Stanford. When I arrived there, in 1963, I came across a book called *Handbook of Research on Teaching*, and I said, "That's it—I want to study how to improve teaching." I took the class that used the book and I've been studying research on teaching ever since.

CLOWES: If we're talking about better teaching methods, we need to have some idea of the end result that teaching is intended to achieve. What is the aim of educating a child, and how would you define a satisfactory finished product?

ROSENSHINE: Education involves starting with a novice and helping the novice become an expert who has strong, readily accessible background knowledge. It's important that background knowledge be readily accessible, and this occurs when knowledge is rehearsed and well-connected and tied to other knowledge. As anyone knows who's studied all night for an exam, that knowledge may not be accessible a month later because it hasn't been sufficiently rehearsed or applied.

Experts not only have well-developed knowledge, they also have strong connections between different parts of that knowledge. When experts access one piece of knowledge, they also access all the other related pieces.

For example, if you mention one thing about the Civil War to American history experts, they are able to connect that information to the intellectual, the economic, and the political knowledge they have about the Civil War. Not only can they connect, but the connections are firm, and are readily accessible because they have been practiced. These knowledge structures are called schema and experts have well-developed and well-connected schema.

CLOWES: It sounds as if the computer is modeled after the way the human mind works, with memory for storage of facts and the key being whether you can access them when you need them.

ROSENSHINE: One very promising area of teaching research has been to compare the knowledge structures of experts and novices. For example, the experts might be professors of physiology and the novices might be interns or graduate students. Or the experts could be experienced lawyers and the novices were first-year lawyers.

What the researchers consistently found was that the experts had more and better constructed knowledge structures and they had faster access to their background knowledge. These findings

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For more information...

Barak Rosenshine's most recent publication is "Converging Findings on Classroom Instruction," a chapter in the 300-page report, *School Reform Proposals: The Research Evidence*. The January 22, 2002 report, edited by Alex Molnar and published by the Education Policy Studies Laboratory at Arizona State University, is available on the Internet at **www.asu.edu/educ/epsl/Archives/EPRU%20Archives/epru-rw.htm.**

The learning prompts book, *Strategic Learning in the Content Areas*, from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, is available from the Department's Web site at **www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dltcl/eis/pubsales/litrcy_4.html**.

occurred in diverse areas such as in chess, in cardiology, chemistry, and law. They also compared expert readers with poor readers and found that the expert readers used better strategies when they were given confusing passages to read.

A lot of expert-novice research was done from the mid-1980s until about 1992, but then it stopped. I would have hoped they would have gone on to ask questions such as, "What sort of education should novices go through in order to become like experts?" and "What does creating expert knowledge mean for classroom instruction?"

But, unfortunately, the research was never used to develop an instructional package for training experts. It was never used to establish instructional goals for classes to teach all children to be like the experts. Our goal should be to develop experts, and we're not doing it.

CLOWES: What do we know about the mechanism of learning that would help us develop an instructional method to develop children into experts?

"[L]ower-achieving children ... are more likely to develop misconceptions [with student-directed learning], and they are more likely not to be able to straighten out the misconceptions later."

ROSENSHINE: First, there's the notion of teaching new material in small steps so that the learning process isn't overloaded by getting too much at once. In addition, there's structure, with the teacher delivering a well-organized presentation and providing students with models and demonstrations of the new material. Then the children begin to practice and are given sufficient supervised practice until they are consistent.

The aim is to have students connect the new material to previous material and to practice until they become fluent, particularly if they're learning skills. Once that is accomplished, the students could go on to experiential learning activities involving inquiry and more complex investigations.

We have found that the most effective teachers, those teachers whose classes made the highest yearly gain, provided a good deal of instructional support for the students. They provided this support by teaching new material in manageable amounts, modeling, guiding student practice, helping students when they made errors, and providing for sufficient practice and review. Many of these teachers also went on to experiential, hands-on activities, but they always did the experiential activities after, not before, the basic material was learned.

CLOWES: You have said that one way to help students learn is to provide them with cognitive strategies. What exactly does that mean?

ROSENSHINE: "Cognitive strategies" refers to specific strategies students can use to provide a support in their initial learning. For example, in teaching writing there is a cognitive strategy called the five-paragraph essay. The format for this essay suggests that students begin with an introductory paragraph containing a main idea supported by three points. These points are elaborated in the next three paragraphs, and then everything is summarized in the final paragraph.

Some teachers hate this format. They think it's reducing learning and taking away creativity. Others love it. I once saw an excellent example of this format when I was observing teachers who had been nominated as being "inspiring." The teacher I was observing was teaching the five-step essay to an advanced class in English. The class had learned *Macbeth* and they were developing an essay to prove a particular point about the play.

On the first day, the teacher presented the prompts and modeled how to use it. With the class's help, he modeled the introductory paragraph. He then modeled how you would take each point and develop supporting arguments. Then he modeled the summary. During this instruction he presented the material using small steps. This instruction gave the students a framework within which they could develop their own material. The next day, the students worked in pairs to develop a five-paragraph essay on another issue from *Macbeth*. Then, on the third day they worked alone.

There were three types of support in these lessons: the framework of the five-paragraph essay within which the students could develop their arguments; the modeling by the teacher; and the temporary support of another student as they began to develop those arguments for themselves.

The teacher told me he used this same approach with classes of varying abilities and had found that the students in the slower classes hung on to the five-step method and used it all the time. Students in the middle used the method some of the time and not others, while the brighter students expanded on it and went off on their own. But in all cases, the five-step method served as a scaffold, as a temporary support while the students were developing their abilities.

Teachers Are Better at Teaching than Children

"[Research in cognitive psychology] helps explain why students taught with structured curricula generally do better than those taught with either more individualized or discovery learning approaches. It also explains why young students who receive their instruction from a teacher usually achieve more than those who are expected to learn new materials and skills on their own or from each other. When young children are expected to learn on their own, particularly in the early stages, the students run the danger of not attending to the right cues, or not processing important points, and of proceeding on to later points before they have done sufficient elaboration and practice."

BARAK ROSENSHINE AND ROBERT STEVENS, "TEACHING FUNCTIONS," IN *HANDBOOK OF RESEARCH ON TEACHING* (MACMILLAN, 1986)

CLOWES: It sounds like training wheels on a bike.

ROSENSHINE: That's right. It is training wheels. It's a crutch. But no one walks with a crutch who doesn't need it. These prompts provide needed initial and temporary support.

Over the last fifteen years, a number of prompts have been developed which serve to help children learn new materials. For example, prompts have been developed to teach students how to summarize a paragraph. That teaches them to look for the main point and the details. Once children learn to do that, they can become better readers and better writers. It was shown, in a number of studies, that children who were taught these procedures were superior to control students.

The State Department of Wisconsin has produced a book of various types of concrete prompts, prompts that can help students in writing, in reading, and in comprehension. Most of these prompts have been tested in experimental studies. One of the prompts is a story web, which involves mapping a story into a web structure. That teaches students to look for the structure in a story and once they've learned to do that, they become more independent readers.

CLOWES: You've made the point that it's easier for children to develop misconceptions with student-directed learning as compared to direct instruction. Could you address this issue?

ROSENSHINE: Human beings are logical, and we try to be as logical as we can. But trying to be logical sometimes results in misconceptions. Take the question: Is the Earth closer to the sun in the winter or the summer? It seems logical to believe that the Earth would be closer to the sun in the summer, whereas in truth it's just the opposite.

Now, the fact that people are logical can lead to quite different implications for instruction. One implication would be to have discovery learning so that children are put in situations where they can use their logic and figure out their own learning. Another implication would be to avoid putting children in situations where they could develop misconceptions that would have to be corrected later.

Jere Brophy noted the possibility, in project-based learning, that some students will have difficulty distinguishing valid content from invalid content. Brophy said that students, particularly less able students, might have difficulty recognizing the signal amid all the noise. In the process of trying to make sense out of what may be a confusing situation, many students may develop quite logical-seeming misconceptions, misconceptions that then are very difficult to change.

"Education involves starting with a novice and helping the novice become an expert who has strong, readily accessible background knowledge."

Ziggy Engelmann also wants to be sure that children don't develop misconceptions when they are learning how to read with his direct instructing method. He knows that beginning readers frequently confuse the letters "b" and "d." He also knows that once they do confuse these two letters, it's very difficult to straighten them out. So Engelmann does not teach them close together, and he emphasizes visual differences between the two letters.

But when children learn those two letters in a discovery mode, then the chances of them developing the misconception increase. This is particularly a problem for lower-achieving children. They are more likely to develop misconceptions and they are more likely not to be able to straighten out the misconceptions later. The structured approach to initial learning makes most sense for them.

I've been to a number of schools with large proportions of children in the federal Free and Reduced Lunch program where all the children learn how to read and decode in kindergarten, and are reading fluently after a few months in first grade.

What I've found at those schools is a strong, basic approach to learning, but with room provided for experiential learning after the children have mastered the basics. In other words, provide the initial instruction by the teacher, be sure the children know what they're doing, and then send them off into the experiential learning.

This is exactly what Alex Molnar and John Zahorik reported in the latest study from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee on the SAGE class-size reduction experiment in Wisconsin. They identified teachers whose students were consistently high-achieving and compared them with teachers whose students were consistently low-achieving. They found the primary teaching method of the higher-achieving teachers is explicit instruction. These teachers also engage their students in experiential learning.

But they point out the experiential learning comes after more teacher-centered instruction. In other words, the higher-achieving teachers use explicit teaching first and then use experiential learning only *after* students have developed a firm grasp of the new knowledge. I used to talk about this years ago as a funnel, where, when you're starting, you do the basic stuff, and then, as the children get better, you expand it and open it up. This study is an example of that. It also has some beautiful examples of teachers who present and model, and do it quickly.

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SMALLER continued from page 1

The impact achieved by another class-size reduction experiment—Wisconsin's SAGE (Student Achievement Guarantee in Education) program—is much greater than that seen in California, but SAGE is not just about reduced class sizes. SAGE is a targeted intervention program aimed at raising the academic achievement of disadvantaged children not only by reducing class sizes to 15 in kindergarten through third grade, but at the same time implementing a rigorous academic curriculum, providing before- and after-school activities, and implementing professional development plans.

"[A] group of international researchers last November recommended legislators should consider lower-cost alternatives—such as attracting better teachers—'before they commit billions more on reducing classes across the board.'"

Students in classrooms adopting this four-part intervention package show a significant performance advantage over students in non-SAGE classrooms in all grades, although the gains do not widen over time. However, the most significant finding emerging from the SAGE experiment is the overriding importance of good teachers and good teaching techniques. (See "Smaller Classes No Remedy for Poor Teachers", page 7.)

In their *Scientific American* paper, Ehrenberg and colleagues point out that little research has been done on alternatives to reducing class sizes. In particular, they note, "no one has studied the relative costs of attracting better teachers as opposed to reducing class sizes."

They also raise a much more fundamental issue: How do small classes actually work to produce improved student performance? The conventional wisdom, they say, is that small classes "minimize disruptions." The proponents of smaller classes also claim they free teachers to focus more individual attention on students and to use more creative instructional techniques. This latter claim does not stand up very well, according to the researchers.

No Change in Teaching Style

"[S]tudy after study has found that educators rarely change their instructional styles to match the size of their class," report Ehrenberg et al. Even teachers in the acclaimed Tennessee STAR reduced class-size experiment did not change their teaching styles in smaller classes, despite participating in a summer professional development program. Moreover, whether classes are large or small, "educators seem to devote the same overall amount of time to individual instruction."

More One-on-One Time

With fewer children in each class, each child can receive more one-on-one attention from the teacher. Although Ehrenberg et al. suggest any such increases in one-on-one attention would not be enough to account for any significant differences in academic performance, a few simple calculations raise some questions about that conclusion.

For example, if one-on-one time is equally distributed throughout a class of 25, each student could have the teacher's undivided attention for just 4.0 percent of the time. If the class size is reduced to 15 and all other things remain the same, the undivided time with the teacher increases to 6.7 percent.

Although a teacher may spend only a small portion of the total teaching time for one-on-one interaction with students, this 67 percent increase in the time available for such interaction represents quite a substantial increase. Even a reduction in class size from 30 to 20 would produce a 50 percent increase in the amount of time available for one-on-one interaction. These calculations suggest smaller classes, by substantially increasing the time for student-teacher interaction, should produce substantial increases in student achievement.

Minimizing Disruptions

The effect of reducing disruptions in a classroom may be analyzed using a model developed by Edward Lazear, an economist at the Hoover Institution and Stanford Graduate School of Business. Lazear was interested in how disruptions by individual students affect the time available for learning for the class as a whole. His basic model calculates the available learning time as the time remaining after disruptions. (See "Do Classes Need to be Smaller or More Orderly?" *School Reform News*, September 2001.)

For example, Lazear's model shows that if each student in a class of 30 disrupts the class 1 percent of the time, only 74 percent of class time is available for learning. That's because each student's disruptions reduce the available learning time for all other students.

Lazear's model permits an estimation of the gain in learning time from reducing class size for different levels of student disruption. (See figure below.) For example, in classes where each student is disruptive 2 percent of the time, the available learning time for a class of 25 is 60 percent of total class time. Reducing the class size to 15 increases the amount of learning time to 74 percent, a gain of 23 percent in learning time. Although each student is just as disruptive as before, the disruptions affect fewer students and there are fewer students to be disruptive.

The more disruptive the class, the greater the gain in learning time when class size is reduced. At a 5 percent level of disruption, the gain in learning time from reducing class size from 25 to 15 is a spectacular 64 percent, from 28 percent to 46 percent. Conversely, the less disruptive the class, the smaller the gain in learning time when class size is reduced. At a 1 percent level of disruption, the gain in learning time from reducing class size from 25 to 15 is 10 percent, from 78 percent to 86 percent.

"California alone has spent more than $1.5 billion annually over the past several years to reduce class sizes to 20 or fewer in kindergarten through third grade ... with only a 'tiny effect.'"

Policy Implications

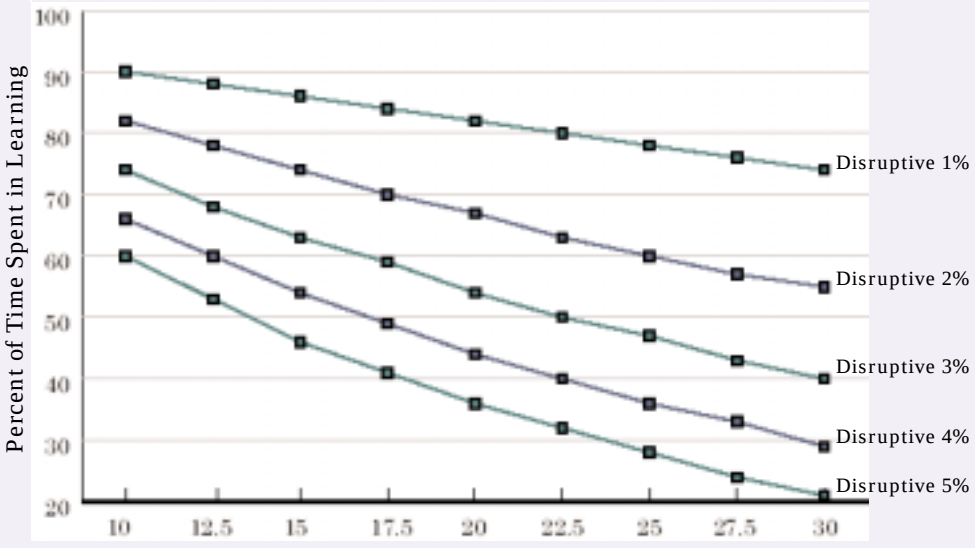
If the aim is to increase the amount of time available for learning, this may be achieved in two ways: either by reducing class size, or by enforcing greater discipline in the classroom.

For example, in a class of 25 students, reducing the level of student disruption from 5 percent to 3 percent increases the amount of available learning time by 68 percent, from 28 percent to 47 percent. This is the same gain that would be achieved by keeping the disruption level constant and reducing class size to 15.

As Lazear points out, "Discipline is a substitute for class size." This has significant policy implications, since the cost of reducing class size is much greater than the cost of teaching an educator improved classroom management techniques. As the last two years' reports from the SAGE experiment have shown, the impact of different teaching styles on student achievement is substantial, independent of class size changes.

CLASS SIZE AND LEARNING

Improving classroom discipline may be more effective in increasing time spent learning than reducing class size.



Source: *School Reform News*, based on research conducted by Edward Lazear, Hoover Institution and Stanford Graduate School of Business

For more information...

WWW The *Scientific American* paper, "Does Class Size Matter?" by Ronald G. Ehrenberg, Dominic J. Brewer, Adam Gamoran, and J. Douglas Willms, is available at the Web site of *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, which published a longer version of the paper in May 2001: **http://www.psychologicalscience.org/newsresearch/publications/journals/pspi2_2_text.html.**

Reports on the SAGE experiment are available at the Web site of the Center for Education Research, Analysis, and Innovation in the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee: **http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/CERAI/sage.html.**

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Education Industry

A sampling of education industry news from The Education Economy, *a weekly publication of the market research firm Eduventures.com, which conducts research on the pre-K-12, post-secondary, corporate training, and consumer markets worldwide. This copyrighted material is used by permission of Eduventures.com, Inc.*

Integrated E-Education Brings Promises ...

Trends in K-12 education technology over the past year indicate a shift away from stand-alone solutions to specific problems and a move towards a more integrated e-education framework, says **Eduventures, Inc.** Executive Vice President Peter J. Stokes in *The Education Economy* on February 1. That move, spurred by an influx of resources from the federal government's E-Rate program, promises to yield "richer learning opportunities and organizational efficiencies rarely seen in the school houses of old."

Recent industry announcements illustrate to Stokes that both vendors and school districts have recognized the value of inter-linking communication portals, classroom technologies, and administrative systems. The result, he says, "is a more integrated e-education framework around which schools can design more effective classroom curriculum and remediation programs."

... and Concerns

Schools that use federal funds to access the Internet are required by the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) to have filtering systems in place by July of this year, or risk losing federal education aid. Although 74 percent of the nation's approximately 15,000 public school districts have installed filters, some have not, citing both philosophical and logistical problems. Critics argue the requirements of CIPA violate the First Amendment, remove community control, and prevent students from using the Internet effectively.

Technology critic David Noble, a history professor at Toronto's York University, also has raised the question of privacy in post-secondary distance education, where the texts of online class discussions may be captured and stored. In his new book, *Digital Diploma Mills*, Noble says it would be possible for law enforcement officials to demand transcripts of class discussions.

Apex Learning Selects Jones Knowledge

Apex Learning, a provider of virtual school solutions for K-12 institutions, announced on February 5 it had selected **Jones Knowledge, Inc.**, to distribute its online professional development courses for K-12 teachers. Jones Knowledge specializes in the development and deployment of online learning solutions for K-12 schools and school districts. Course topics range from teaching Advanced Placement classes to classroom management and assessment.

Louisiana Selects Apex

Two days later, on February 7, Apex Learning announced a partnership with the **State of Louisiana** to provide the online learning platform for the Louisiana Virtual High School. Through the school, the state will offer its students 16 locally developed online courses and access to Apex Learning's online advanced placement courses.

Edison Stands by Revenue Accounting Policy

Edison Schools, Inc. a proprietary manager of public and charter schools, announced on February 14 it stands by its revenue recognition policy, which had been questioned in a Bloomberg news report. The company said its revenue recognition policy had been in place for seven years and was reviewed by its outside auditors, PriceWaterhouseCoopers, as recently as last month.

The Bloomberg report had said Edison falsely boosted revenues by including teacher salaries and other expenses for school contracts as income. The company's shares, which had fallen by approximately 10 percent after publication of the Bloomberg story, rose more than 10 percent immediately following Edison's announcement.

Massachusetts Renews Test Prep Contract

On January 27, **The Princeton Review**, a provider of test preparation and higher education admissions services, and the **Massachusetts Department of Education** announced renewal and expansion of a contract for usage of an online tutorial program designed to help students in the class of 2003 and 2004 improve the math and reading skills required to succeed on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS). The contract offers services to up to 20,000 students and is worth $190,000.

McDougal Littell's Algebra Books Go Online

Under the terms of an agreement announced January 17, **ExploreLearning**, a provider of interactive online learning solutions, and **McDougal Littell**, a division of **Houghton Mifflin** that publishes materials for grades 6-12, will develop and deliver enhanced online versions of McDougal Littell's algebra textbooks, *Algebra 1* and *Algebra 1: Concepts and Skills*.

McGraw-Hill and Mindsurf to Offer Digital Curricula

On March 6, **McGraw-Hill Education's Digital Learning Group**, a provider of technology solutions for the pre-K-12 market, and **Mindsurf**, a company that develops, publishes, and distributes one-to-one software for schools and teachers, announced they are jointly developing digital curricula based on McGraw-Hill Education's electronic textbooks for Mindsurf's Discourse instructional platform. The new product enables teachers to provide lessons and assessments from the textbook directly to each student computer.

NCS Pearson Creates Education Solution

NCS Pearson announced on January 17 it combined three of its business units to create an education solution that includes curriculum, assessment, and enterprise data management products. The new company, called **NCS Learn**, represents the union of NCS Pearson's K-12 Enterprise Software Solutions, SchoolCONNECT, and the NCS Learn comprehensive courseware divisions.

PLATO Reports Record First Quarter Results

On March 1, **PLATO Learning, Inc.**, a provider of computer-based and e-learning instruction for the K-12 market, announced revenues for the first quarter ended January 31, 2002 totaling $14 million, an increase of $4.3 million, or 44 percent over the comparable period for fiscal year 2001. Net loss for the first quarter of fiscal year 2002 was $1.4 million, a $1.0 million improvement from the reported net loss of $2.4 million for the same period of fiscal year 2001. Diluted loss per share was $0.08 in the first quarter of fiscal year 2002 versus a reported $0.21 diluted loss per share in the first quarter of fiscal year 2001.

Sylvan Acquires Controlling Interest in Walden U. ...

Sylvan Ventures LLC, a subsidiary of **Sylvan Learning Systems, Inc.** announced on February 20 it has exercised its option to acquire an additional 10 percent interest in Walden University, an online university offering Ph.D. and other graduate-level degree programs in education, management, and the social and behavioral sciences. The $8 million investment gives Sylvan Ventures a controlling, 51 percent stake in Walden. Although historically based in the K-12 market, Sylvan plans to grow in the online higher education market through streamlining and acquisition.

... and Acquires National Technological U.

Sylvan Learning Systems, Inc. announced on March 20 it has agreed to acquire **National Technological University**, a provider of engineering and technical degrees through distance education. NTU will become part of Sylvan's Online Higher Education division, fitting into Sylvan's strategy to offer degrees to working professionals in specific markets.

Vantage Learning Selected by ACT ...

On February 25, 2002, **Vantage Learning**, a provider of online assessment and automated essay scoring, announced that its IntelliMetric Essay Scoring Engine has been chosen by **ACT, Inc.** to provide back-end assessment services. ACT, Inc. provides more than a hundred assessment, research, information, and program management services in the broad areas of educational planning, career planning, and workforce development. Vantage's IntelliMetric Scoring Engine uses a blend of artificial intelligence and the digitization of human expertise to accurately score and assess a student's competency in a range of subjects.

... and by CTB/McGraw-Hill

CTB/McGraw-Hill, a provider of assessment tools, and **Vantage Learning** announced an agreement on March 18 whereby Vantage Learning will provide its IntelliMetric essay-scoring engine for the newly introduced CTB Online Writing application.

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The Friedman Report

School Choice Roundup

CALIFORNIA

Union Says "Yes" to Candidates Who Say "No" to Vouchers

California Teachers Association President Wayne Johnson told his State Council delegates that the union's first challenge for 2002 will be to help re-elect Gov. Gray Davis.

"This is a tough sell with a sizable percentage of our membership," said Johnson, even though 86 percent of the State Council, the purported representatives of those members, voted to endorse Davis almost a full year before the election. So why do it? CTA Executive Director Carolyn Doggett explained the union's criteria for endorsing a governor:

1) Opposition to vouchers
2) Support for an increase in school funding, particularly for teacher pay
3) Support for collective bargaining
4) Support for increased retirement benefits
5) Support of positive educational initiatives

Doggett cited Davis' backing of a school bond measure as a "positive education initiative."

Education Intelligence Agency Communiqué
March 4, 2002

Court Says "No" to Tuition Tax Refund

A three-judge panel of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals unanimously denied the claim of California parents for a partial tax refund for tuition paid to Jewish day schools, upholding an earlier decision of the U.S. Tax Court. The couple, Michael and Marla Sklar, wanted to deduct 55 percent of their children's school tuition, claiming that was the proportion devoted to religious education and thus a charitable donation to a religious organization.

The Internal Revenue Service permits followers of the Church of Scientology to claim deductions similar to the one claimed by the Sklars. Although the Court raised questions about how the IRS had treated the claims for religious training by Scientologists, the panel held that payments for which a taxpayer receives consideration are not deductible.

Education Week
February 13, 2002

COLORADO

Tax Credit Would Help Public and Private School Students

A foundation begun two years ago by energy executive and philanthropist Alex Cranberg has awarded $2 million in private scholarships, enabling 555 children to attend 107 private schools.

Now there's a bill (HB 1309) in the Colorado legislature that would fund educational assistance programs that would help needy children who want to choose private schools or who remain in government schools. Forty percent of the aid would go to public school students, for such purposes as tutoring or education supplies, and the remainder would go for private scholarships.

The bill is sponsored by the chairman of the House Education Committee, Nancy Spence (R-Centennial), but opposed by the chairman of the Senate Education Committee, Stan Matsunaka (D-Loveland). Matsunaka said private schools receiving state aid but not having to abide by teacher certification and other government rules "would be a problem for me." Cranberg argues schools should exist for children, not children for the system.

"I want public schools to be successful," he said. "More to the point, I want children to have a good education, wherever they get it from."

The Friedman Report
March 2002

CONNECTICUT

Voucher Proposal May Be Gaining Favor

In the budget plan he presented earlier this year, Connecticut Governor John G. Rowland proposed a limited school voucher plan that would permit parents of children in substandard schools to receive a voucher worth up to $4,000 towards tuition at a private school. Although the Republican governor has included some type of voucher plan in previous budgets, the plans have gone nowhere.

But Dean Pagani, Rowland's spokesperson, said more people are beginning to look at the voucher debate from the child's point of view.

"A child only has one chance to get a good education, and why should he be forced to go to a substandard school just because of the neighborhood he lives in?" Pagani asked. "In the past, the arguments focused on protecting the public schools."

The Citizens Alliance for Public Education, which has opposed vouchers in Connecticut for the past six years, is ready to battle them again.

"Rather than abandon the public schools, we need to fix them," argued the Rev. Fidelia Lane, president of the Alliance. I think the public schools are a lot better than many people think they are."

New London Day
February 28, 2002

GEORGIA

More Choices This Fall, Thanks to Bush Education Bill

Because Georgia already has a school accountability system in place to rate the performance of its schools, children at 436 low-performing schools in the Peach State will be among the first in the country to take advantage of school choice provisions in President George W. Bush's education reform package. The cost of transferring the children to other schools in their districts will be picked up by the failing school. This is just what Atlanta parent Shankia Towers is looking for to get her three children out of their failing neighborhood school.

"I don't have the money to send them to private school or to move to a ritzy part of town," she told AP reporter Barnini Chakraborty.

Bush's "No Child Left Behind" Act enables children in schools that have been low-performing for two years to transfer to another school in the district, with the failing school picking up the transportation costs. After being low-performing for three years the school must provide outside tutorial services, and after five years the school could be reconstituted with new staff.

Savannah Morning News
March 22, 2002
Associated Press
March 23, 2002

ILLINOIS

Corporate Tax Credit is "Voucher" to Foes

A Democratic legislator from Chicago is sponsoring a bill that would grant corporations credits of up to $100,000 a year on their state income taxes for donations they make to scholarship organizations that help low-income families send their children to private schools. The government education establishment has vowed to defeat the measure.

"If it looks like a voucher and walks like a voucher, it's a voucher, and we're fighting it," commented George King, a spokesman for the Illinois Education Association teacher union. He claimed it was "public money trying to be funneled through a conduit to private and parochial schools, and we think it's earmarked for public schools." As "public money," it should be going to public schools, he said.

The sponsor, Representative Joseph Lyons, urged a broader perspective: "If we shut down all the Catholic schools tomorrow, what would the public schools do? Private schools and parochial schools serve a purpose. They keep pressure off the public schools."

The *Chicago Sun-Times* reported that the Big Shoulders Fund, started by the late Cardinal Joseph Bernardin in 1986 to assist inner-city Catholic schools serving disadvantaged children, would be one scholarship program the tax credit would benefit. At one of the Big Shoulders schools, St. John De La Salle School, only one-tenth of the families that would qualify for aid under the proposed new program are currently receiving scholarships.

"We are a surviving school," said the principal, Linda Bond. "It's becoming a very difficult thing for us now because of the recession. We need the support of corporations."

As if to emphasize Bond's point, the Chicago Archdiocese announced that two more elementary schools will be closed at the end of this school year.

The Friedman Report
March 2002

CEF Names New Executive Director

Adrian Brigham, head of the Chicago Chapter of Citizens for Educational Freedom, has been named CEF's executive director. After starting his career in sales and sales management, since 1980 Brigham has operated his own successful business involving audio-visual equipment rental. He still owns the company but has turned much of the day-to-day management over to others so he can devote his full schedule to CEF.

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THE FRIEDMAN REPORT: School Choice Roundup

"The time has never been better to advance the cause of school choice," he said.

CEF is a national grassroots organization established in 1959 and dedicated to the belief that every child, regardless of race, religion, or income, should get the very best education available—a goal CEF believes will be attainable when parents reclaim their right to choose the school and the teachers that are best for their children without financial penalty.

For more information about Citizens for Educational Freedom, visit its Web site at www.educational-freedom.org or contact Adrian Brigham at abrigham@educational-freedom.org.

Parents' Choice Newsletter
January/February 2002

MASSACHUSETTS

Pro-Voucher "Poster Child" Reich Now Denounces Vouchers

Running in the Massachusetts gubernatorial primary, former U.S. Labor Secretary Robert Reich joined four other Democratic candidates in opposing school vouchers. He said he was "unutterably opposed to vouchers" and the idea of using them at private schools, although he was in favor of increased funding for poor children so they could choose a better public school.

"I am against vouchers and I am against any mechanism that drains resources from our public schools," Reich declared on January 23. "Let me be absolutely clear on that."

Eighteen months ago, Reich was basking in media attention because of his embrace of progressive school vouchers, where poorer children would be given larger vouchers to attend private secular schools. Although he then proposed placing some restrictions on participating privates schools, he warned against burdening private schools with too much regulation.

"It's unbelievable to me that there's this belief that our problems with public education can be resolved by making private schools more like public schools," he said at the time, characterizing himself as "the liberal poster child for the pro-voucher movement."

Boston Globe
October 29, 2000
Associated Press
February 8, 2002

MICHIGAN

Losing Students, School Drops Boycott of Choice Program

In 1996, the state of Michigan created a Schools of Choice program—involving just public schools—whereby parents can select their children's school district under certain conditions, one being that a district agrees to accept transferring students. Southfield Public Schools was one of the government systems that boycotted the program.

"For years we resisted it, the whole thing of schools competing," commented district spokesman Ken Siver. "That's the governor's agenda."

But then something happened to change that: Southfield discovered it was losing students, and, with them, state aid. So Southfield decided to become a Schools of Choice district after all.

"We were sitting on our principles of why we wouldn't be involved in Schools of Choice," said Siver. "But the reality of the world is you can sit on your principles or you can get in the game. Why should we allow ourselves to be picked off?"

According to the *Detroit Free Press*, about two-thirds of Michigan school districts now participate, and more than 33,000 children attend school in a district other than their home one. Parents' reasons range from convenience to work to more substantive considerations, such as the special programs districts are creating to attract transferring students.

The Friedman Report
March 2002

NEW MEXICO

Vouchers Proposed to Close Achievement Gap

The achievement gap between minorities and Anglos in New Mexico is huge and may have widened over the past 30 years, according to a new report by The Albuquerque Partnership, a coalition of 40 agencies, neighborhood associations, and individuals seeking to solve social problems.

During the past year, Anglos scored 51.6 percent higher than their Hispanic classmates on the TerraNova standardized tests. In 1972-73, the scores of Anglos were only 23 percent higher on a different measure, the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills.

Partnership director Moises Venegas believes the time has come to use public vouchers to help disadvantaged children overcome the achievement gap.

"I'm not necessarily against public education," he told the Albuquerque Journal. "But public education hasn't been able to educate the urban low-income student and/or Hispanic, black, [or] Native American student very well. If you haven't been able to do it, let someone else try, please."

Governor Gary Johnson has championed vouchers, but the state legislature has refused to pass either universal or targeted vouchers. While agreeing change is needed, House Education Committee chairman Rick Miera (D-Albuquerque) doesn't think vouchers are the answer. Parent Elaine Sanchez disagrees. She drives her son cross-city every day in search of better education.

"To me, it seems like it's always the low-income [students] that are in the failing schools," she said. "To me, whatever is going to make my son learn, I will do it."

The Friedman Report
March 2002

Johnson's Last Call for Vouchers Goes Unheeded...

New Mexico Governor Gary Johnson called for a phased-in voucher program as part of a comprehensive education reform package to overhaul the state's public schools. Presenting his proposals to the legislature in January, the Republican governor stressed the reforms could be accomplished at no new cost to taxpayers because the investment already had been made, with nearly $600 million having been added to the public schools' budget over the past seven years.

"Now, I believe, is the time to require the educational system in New Mexico to perform," he said, outlining student achievement, parental involvement, teacher support, and system accountability as the four major areas of reform. "And it is time to demonstrate that it is giving taxpayers a good return on their investment by showing us that our children are learning."

The governor's voucher plan would be phased in over five years, first serving those students most in need of a choice of schools, but eventually providing all of New Mexico's students with the opportunity to attend their choice of pubic or private schools "in order to best suit their individual needs and interests." Initially, vouchers would be offered to students from low-income families who attend Albuquerque public schools with high dropout rates, low test scores, and a high incidence of violence and school vandalism. More families would become eligible in subsequent years as income level ceilings are raised.

Vouchers would have a value of $3,000 but could not exceed the tuition and fees normally charged by the selected private school except in the case of special education students. Appropriate amounts of the district's transportation and at-risk funding would be assigned to each voucher student.

To eliminate accounting confusion and facilitate per-pupil funding, a static identification number would be assigned to each pupil to track mobility and academic progress.

The Democratic-controlled legislature quickly dismissed Johnson's proposals.

Office of the Governor
State of New Mexico

...But Democrats Introduce Voucher Bills, Too

Although Governor Gary Johnson's voucher proposals have been voted down every year they have been proposed, this year his voucher bill had some unexpected company on the way to defeat—two school choice bills sponsored by Democrats. This is the first time Democrats have supported school choice legislation in New Mexico.

Senator Manny Aragon (D-Albuquerque), the former Senate President Pro Tem, introduced the Student Options Act (SB 443), which would provide a voucher for dropouts and for families who qualify for the Free and Reduced Lunch Program in Albuquerque. Aragon's constituents, mostly low-income Latino families, earlier this year voted against giving more money to the Albuquerque Public Schools. Before dying at the end of New Mexico's 30-day legislative session, Aragon's bill had moved farther and faster than any other school choice legislation.

Senator Roman Maes (D-Santa Fe) introduced the Education Tax Credit Act (SB 300), which would allow corporations, individuals, or other entities to claim tax credits of up to $100,000 for donations to organizations that provide scholarships to low-income families. The bill was tabled after a Senate Education Committee hearing.

www.legis.state.nm.us

NEW JERSEY

Out-of-District Students Hunted Down Like Common Criminals

Administrators in Linwood, New Jersey are taking extraordinary measures to keep children out of their public schools. The school board there hired a $200-per-hour private investigator to "gather evidence against students who are suspected to be living outside the district, including following them to see where they spend the night, if necessary," reported the Associated Press.

Other northern New Jersey districts post private eyes at school bus stops to trail students on their way home. The Linwood district claims to have nailed 15 "illegal students" this year alone.

In East Providence, Rhode Island the district attendance officer took tips from teachers and school bus drivers to investigate some 27 suspected "illegal students." Robert P. Rodericks admits he sometimes waits for parents to pick up their child, and then he follows them home.

Last August, the Education Intelligence Agency detailed similar problems in Connecticut and New York, where there was a "black market in school choice," with parents falsifying their place of residence in order to get their children into suburban schools.

"These parents also want better learning environments for their children, but they can't afford or won't pay tuition," wrote reporter Mydria Clark of the *Hartford Courant*.

Education Intelligence Agency Communiqué
March 18, 2002

NEW YORK

Education Tax Credit Introduced

An education tax credit measure was introduced in both the New York Senate and Assembly on February 11. The bill, the Educational Tax Incentives Act (S.6274 and A.9801), seeks to encourage New York taxpayers to support education by providing a tax credit against their state income tax.

The 22 sponsors of the bill are made up of both Democratic and Republican legislators from New York City and the suburbs as well as upstate districts. The bill's sponsors are Senator Serphin Maltese (R-Queens) and Assemblyman Dov Hikind (D-Kings).

Choice Notes
January-February 2002

School Choice Party Formed

The School Choice Party was formed as a new political party late last year; its leaders have decided to go forward with the process of circulating petitions to get their candidates on the ballot this November.

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THE FRIEDMAN REPORT: School Choice Roundup

If the School Choice Party were to attract 50,000 votes in November, it would qualify as an official political party in New York State, with a line on every ballot for the following four years. The party could endorse incumbent elected officials, support challengers from other parties, or choose to put up its own candidates for local, state, and federal offices.

For more information about the School Choice Party, call 718/783-0592; write P.O. Box 021787, Brooklyn, NY 11202-1787; or e-mail School_Choice_Party@hotmail.com.

Choice Notes
January-February 2002

TEXAS

Public School Choice Program Provides Few Options

A public school choice program created in 1995 allows students in Texas to transfer from low-performing public schools to a better campus in another district, if they provide their own transportation. The receiving district gets the state education funding the student's home district would have received, plus a 10 percent bonus. But of the 141,000 Texas students enrolled in such schools last year, only 200 transferred to other schools.

That's because, while students are free to leave bad schools, other schools—even those with empty seats—aren't required to put out the welcome mat for them. And most don't.

"As long as you give school districts the choice of whether or not to serve children in need, you're not going to make much progress," commented Allan Parker, founder of the Texas Justice Foundation.

When parent Barbara Senter couldn't find a school to take her son under the program, she sent him to live with grandparents in another district during the week, and he attends school there.

"It shows we do have school choice in Texas," noted Parker. "That choice is called moving."

Dallas Morning News
February 4, 2002

UTAH

Tuition Tax Credit Bill Fails

A measure to provide a $2,116 tax credit for private school tuition passed out of a Senate committee on February 6, ready for debate in the full Utah Senate. However, the bill's sponsor, Senator Chris Buttars (R-West Jordan), killed the proposal just before the end of the legislative session in March because he did not have time to solidify support for the measure.

The bill would have extended a tax credit of up to $2,116 to families with taxable incomes less than $30,000 and also to donors to nonprofit organizations providing scholarships toward private school tuition. Corporations and individuals could be donors, and public schools would have received $1,000 for each student who transferred to a private school.

Buttars and his supporters said the tax credit would force public schools to improve as they compete for students, but public school educators charged it attacks public education. Although opponents disagree, Buttars said the math behind his bill is "simple. It's third grade division and multiplication."

The state would lose about $3,000 for each student who opted out of the system—the $2,116 credit plus $1,000 for each student transferring out—but it would still come out $2,000 per student ahead because it costs more than $5,100 to educate each student in the public schools each year.

"If the credit encouraged 10,000 new students not to enter the public system, taxpayers would save $20 million a year—not to mention the cost of building new schools," noted the editors of *The Salt Lake Tribune*. "The per-pupil expenditures would rise in school districts since they would get $1,000 for each child who opted out of their system."

It's not "an elitist scheme cooked up to subsidize the wealthy," note the editors. The income limits exclude children from well-off families who already are enrolled in private schools, and the neediest students have the greatest potential to benefit from the scholarship organizations.

The Salt Lake Tribune
February 6-9, 2002

VERMONT

School Choice Bill Voted out of Committee

In early March, the Vermont House Education Committee voted 6-5 along party lines—Republicans for, Democrats against—to move forward a comprehensive school choice bill, H.716. The bill contains both open enrollment and tax credit elements.

The current version of H.716 now contains an expansive open enrollment program for all public schools in Vermont with money following the child using a combination of block grant and local district money. A previous version contained a voucher-like component that would have allowed the block grant to follow students to private schools. With about 3,500 students attending private schools, this could have cost the state between $12 and $17 million.

For more information…

WWW The Ethan Allen Institute has prepared a Policy Brief on H.716, available on the Institute's Web site under 'Policy Briefs' at **www.ethanallen.org**. The text of the bill is available at **www.leg.state.vt.us/docs/2002/calendar/hc020312.htm**.

To facilitate parents' choices of independent schools, the bill includes a 50 percent tax credit for donations to Education Assistance Organizations, which would then give scholarships and grants to students attending approved or recognized independent schools.

Rep. Howard Crawford (R-Burke), committee chairman, says he feels good about getting the bill out of committee, but sees some significant obstacles ahead, particularly the section on support of Educational Assistance Organizations.

Another school choice bill, H.597, introduced in the Vermont House in January with 41 sponsors, would allow special education students to use vouchers if they are unable to meet achievement goals in public schools. A bill introduced in the Senate in January, S.227, would reimburse parents for expenses related to choices in education.

Vermont Education Reports
January through March, 2002
Rutland Herald
March 1, 2002

Voucher Critics Spurn Public Schools

Radio ads run earlier this year for the Vermont-National Education Association feature a teacher from the Mount Mansfield Union High School and tell listeners that public schools in Vermont "keep getting better." However, Libby Sternberg of Vermonters for Better Education points out in a *Burlington Free Press* commentary that the president of the Vermont-NEA has chosen to transfer his child from Mount Mansfield to a private parochial school.

"What's good for the head of the teachers union should be good for low-income Vermont parents as well," says Sternberg.

Sternberg notes 12 percent of other Vermont-NEA members also have their children in private schools. In addition, several other vocal Vermont opponents of school choice have sent their own children to private schools. Many were educated in private schools themselves.

For example, almost half of Vermont's state senators went to private schools. Among those who went to exclusive private academies are two outspoken critics of vouchers: Sen. Jean Ankeney (D-Chittenden) and Sen. Peter Shumlin (D-Windham). Shumlin was one of three senators who held a press conference last summer to denounce the Ethan Allen Institute's voucher proposal. Public schools, he argued at the press conference, make up the foundation of our democracy.

Vermont Education Report
January 14, 2002

WISCONSIN

Cutting Voucher Program Would Increase State Spending

In March, the Wisconsin Legislature's Joint Finance Committee voted 12-4 to reject a proposal from State Senator Russell Decker (D-Schofield) to reduce the maximum Milwaukee school voucher amount for 2002-03 from $5,784 per student to $2,000 for elementary and middle school children and $3,000 for high school students. According to the Legislative Fiscal Bureau, Decker's proposal would eventually increase state costs and shift more school aid to the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS).

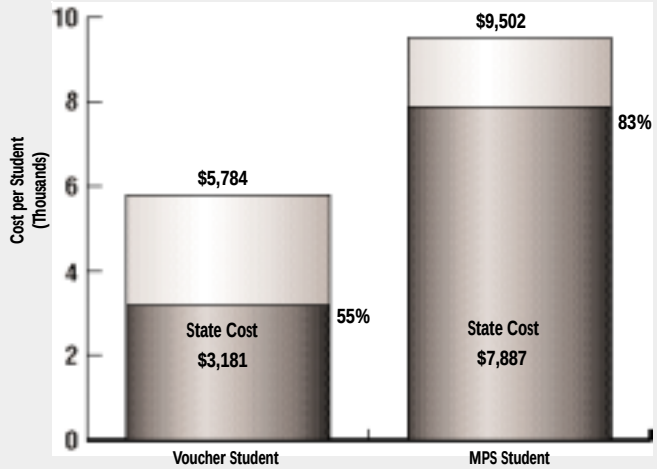
According to the Bureau, if the smaller voucher amount caused 75 percent of choice students to transfer back to MPS, state costs would rise by $6.8 million, and $15.4 million in school aid would be transferred to MPS from all other school districts. That's because the state pays only 55 percent of the per-pupil cost of students in the voucher program, compared to 83 percent of the per-pupil cost of students attending MPS.

In fact, the state would be more than $2,000 per student ahead even if it funded 100 percent of the cost of a voucher student versus 83 percent of an MPS student.

This is not the first time Decker has proposed cutting funding for the Milwaukee voucher program. When he made a similar proposal last year, a survey by the Institute for the Transformation of Learning at Marquette University showed that 44 private schools would close if the measure were approved.

School Choice Advisor
March 2002

Cost to State of Voucher Student vs. Milwaukee Public School Students



Source: *School Reform News*, based on figures from School Choice Advisor.

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MATH continued from page 1

operations efficiently and automatically," noted Mrs. Cheney, who moderated the panel.

Hard-Wired to Learn Math?

The NCTM "new, new" math standards issued in 1989 were "deliberately revolutionary, self-consciously so," said Mike McKeown, professor of medical science at Brown University and cofounder of Mathematically Correct, a bipartisan citizens group seeking to improve math instruction.

NCTM's standards were heavy on teaching method while deliberately downgrading such content as mastery of skills, memory, and standard algorithms. They stressed instead "inventive methods, generic problem-solving, techniques such as guess and check, conceptual understanding, perhaps differentiable from true understanding, statistics, and data analysis." Additionally, the NCTM standards shun direct teaching and practice "in favor of discovery learning and creation of *ad hoc* methods."

McKeown said "pernicious, appealing, and romantic fallacies" underlie the NCTM standards, which were moderated somewhat in 2000 but retain their predominant emphasis. One fallacy is that humans are "hard-wired" to learn math, just as Whole Language proponents erroneously claim we are hard-wired to learn alphabetic principle. To the contrary, from simple arithmetic to complicated algebra, "we learn them better when we're taught," McKeown said.

Lee Stiff, a professor of mathematics education at North Carolina State University, who became NCTM's president in April 2000, sought to put distance between NCTM and programs such as the Mathland example cited by Mrs. Cheney. He said that example "is not an adequate representation of what the standards say," and added: "If a program embraces the [NCTM] standards and does something different than what we talk about, is that our fault?"

"[C]hildren may be learning more geometry and problem-solving, and they may be somewhat better estimators than they were, but arithmetic is headed south."

The "additive process for dividing" makes sense for smaller numbers, perhaps 25 divided by 7 or 128 divided by 4, but when it comes to larger numbers, "young people have to use their algorithms that they've learned," said Stiff. But what's important is that when they use the algorithms, "they've had exposure to the simpler cases where the structure can be revealed ... now they understand how it all fits together."

Traditional Math Fuzzier Still?

Stiff contended math as it was *traditionally* taught is "fuzzy." If students could add, subtract, multiply, and divide—i.e., correctly carry out all the basic math operations—yet could not understand place value, grouping/regrouping, or even "borrowing" and "carrying," then the math was unclear to them, and hence "fuzzy," he said.

"It's all about change," he declared. "We need students now who are flexible and resourceful problem-solvers. We need students who can take those basic facts, understand how they are developed, and then apply those basic facts."

A leader among eminent mathematicians and scientists opposing NCTM math, mathematics professor David Klein of California State University/Northridge, contested the effort of NCTM leaders to dissociate their organization from the most widely used "fuzzy math" programs.

When the U.S. Department of Education in October 1999 released a list of 10 so-called exemplary or promising programs—which turned out to be entirely those radically de-emphasizing mastery of the basics—Klein led in presenting an open letter from many of the nation's most prominent mathematicians urging the federal department to withdraw its endorsement. The NCTM then announced its "unconditional support" of the expert panel that embraced the 10 programs as well as "the quality and appropriateness of their final recommendations."

Fuzzy math "originated with the NCTM and the nation's colleges of education," Klein said. But in opening his presentation, he zeroed in on his No. 1 target: "No single institution in the United States has caused more damage to the mathematical education of children than the National Science Foundation," Klein asserted. He made clear he was not criticizing the NSF's good work in supporting scientific research, but rather was referring to the NSF's Education and Human Resources Division, which has lavished federal funds on fuzzy math programs.

"Fuzzy math books claim to teach conceptual understanding, but they don't," said Klein. "Instead, they squander valuable class time on aimless projects with little or no intellectual content. One can draw a parallel between the philosophy that underlies the failed Whole Language learning approach to reading and these NSF/NCTM programs."

Catering to Women, Minorities

Both Klein and McKeown contended that part of the rationale for NCTM math is that women and minorities have "learning styles" different from white males; that is, they rely on inductive reasoning as opposed to the logical deduction that forms the core of mathematics. Hence, the NCTM and NSF have undertaken to "redefine mathematics itself," said Klein, in an effort to conform to a theory about learning styles. Such ideology is "misguided in the extreme," said Klein. He cited the work of such educators as Nancy Ichinaga and Jaime Escalante in achieving high rates of success for minorities in "classical, content-rich environments."

Gail Burrill, a former president of the NCTM and current faculty member at Michigan State University, said that from her 25 years' experience teaching high school math, she would agree students need to master skills and that computation is important. However, they need something more, she insisted.

"Students need to see that they are learning something useful and relevant," she argued. "Students learn if they're actively involved in choosing and evaluating strategies, considering assumptions and receiving feedback. Students learn by building or transferring knowledge from previous experience."

Burrill criticized traditional math teaching for focusing "too narrowly on the memorization of information, giving short shrift to critical thinking, conceptual understanding, and in-depth knowledge of subject matter." She suggested asking friends or neighbors or seatmates on planes, and seeing if the response doesn't come, "Oh, math. I never did get it." Math should make sense to all students, so that no longer do young people choose careers based on math-avoidance, she suggested.

Score Gains Illusory

Burrill also cited gains in National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), SAT, and ACT scores over the past 10 years as evidence of progress. However, Tom Loveless, a senior fellow at The Brookings Institution, presented a statistical analysis casting doubt on gains, particularly in NAEP scores.

The main NAEP test showing the gains is "loaded toward the NCTM. It is based on the NCTM standards," said Loveless. "Children are allowed to use calculators on a portion of this fourth-grade test. And such concepts as geometry, data analysis, and problem-solving are far more important on this NAEP test, and that's one of the reasons children are scoring better at it."

"[I]nternational tests showing U.S. students lagging in math also show that in other countries, teachers are mathematicians by training."

On the longer-term NAEP trend test, dating back to the 1970s, scores have remained flat. Why? An analysis by Brookings' Brown Center suggests computational skills have plummeted since 1990, coinciding with introduction of the NCTM standards. To be sure, children may be learning more geometry and problem-solving, and they may be somewhat better estimators than they were, but arithmetic is headed south.

"It's a trade-off," said Loveless, "and the trade-off is one that I do not think is a good bargain because they're losing their computation skills; they're losing their basic proficiency in arithmetic. So that trade-off is not one that I would make."

If there was a major point of agreement, it was that U.S. schools need more math teachers who have majored in math. Stiff said international tests showing U.S. students lagging in math also show that in other countries, teachers are mathematicians by training.

"We want that for our children. Why don't we require it? If we're serious about the mathematics, why don't we require it?"

Robert Holland is a senior fellow at the Lexington Institute, a public policy think tank in Arlington, Virginia. His email address is rholl1176@yahoo.com.

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JUST THE FACTS: TEACHER CERTIFICATION

Teacher Certification Attracts Increased Attention

BY GEORGE A. CLOWES

Although serious questions have been raised about the value of the current procedure for certifying elementary and secondary schoolteachers, sheer inertia and lack of comfort with alternatives mean it's unlikely the procedure will be changed significantly in the near future ... or at least until a more competitive market emerges in K-12 education.

In fact, since politicians will want to demonstrate they are actively "solving" the problem of teacher quality, they are much more likely to impose new regulations rather than lift existing ones.

During the next few years, increased attention will be focused on teacher qualifications and performance for another reason: President George W. Bush's "No Child Left Behind" Act. The Act requires that, by 2006, every K-12 class have a "highly qualified teacher." Next year, states must submit plans to show how they plan to achieve that goal.

According to the new law, a "highly qualified teacher" is a person who is:

- fully certified or licensed under state law; and,
- competent in the subjects he or she is teaching.

Teachers for whom the state has waived certification requirements are not considered under the law to be "highly qualified." Proof of competence may require a bachelor's degree in a content area, passing a state test, or National Board Certification.

How do current state certification requirements stack up against the requirements of the new Act? In a recent issue of *Education Leadership*, Christopher T. Cross and Diana Wyllie Rigden note the following differences in initial certification requirements for the 50 states and the District of Columbia:

- Only 15 states require all teachers to earn a degree in a content area (36 do not).
- 21 states requires a degree in a content area for future high school teachers (30 do not).
- 12 states require a degree in education (39 do not).
- 3 states require no teaching experience.
- 37 states require candidates to pass a basic skills test (14 do not).
- 14 states require tests to assess teaching performance (37 do not).
- 33 states require a subject matter exam (18 do not).

Teacher Certification Requirements by State

School Reform News had planned to publish a Data Table summarizing State Requirements for Teacher Certification but quickly abandoned the idea after perusing the 51 pages of tables and footnotes in Part B alone—"Requirements for the Initial Teaching Certificate"—of the latest *Teacher Certification Manual* from the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC). Instead, we offer here information on two regularly updated publications that describe each state's teacher certification requirements.

National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC)

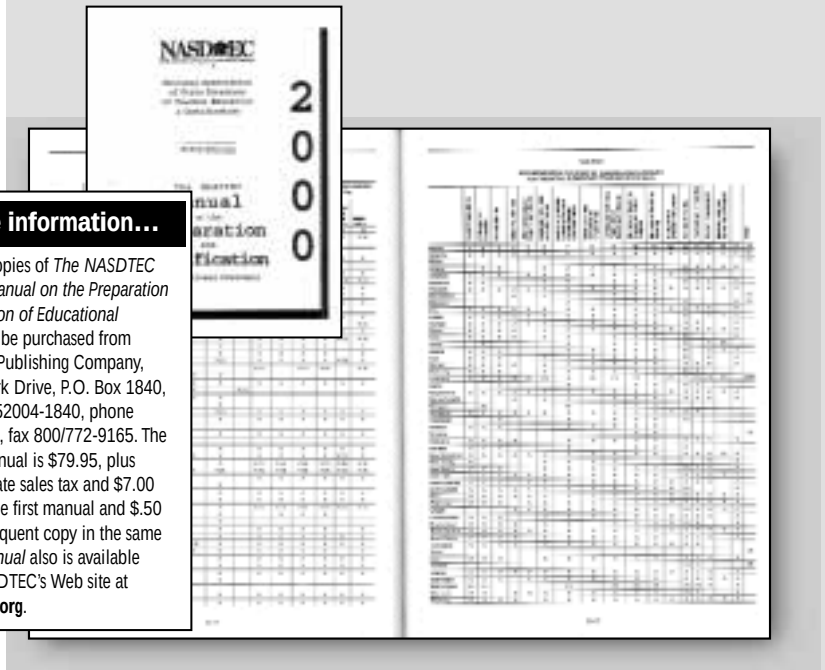
NASDTEC's publication, *The NASDTEC Manual on the Preparation and Certification of Educational Personnel*, is widely recognized as the most comprehensive printed source of state-by-state information pertaining to the preparation, certification, and fitness of teachers and other school personnel. The *Manual* includes state-by-state information about major areas of interest, including:

- certification requirements and standards;
- examinations and assessments;
- interstate mobility;
- teacher training institutions and approved programs;
- fingerprinting and screening for moral character;
- support systems for beginning teachers;
- performance standards and assessments; and
- fees

The *Manual*, first published in 1984, is updated on a regular basis and is now in its fifth edition (2000). It consists of 12 sections, the first of which runs 201 pages and details the certification requirements of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Schools, 10 Canadian Provinces, and New Zealand. The separate sections cover initial certification requirements, requirements for the second stage of teacher certification, professional development, special education certification, and so on.

For more information…

WWW Copies of *The NASDTEC Manual on the Preparation and Certification of Educational Personnel* can be purchased from Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 4050 Westmark Drive, P.O. Box 1840, Dubuque, IA 52004-1840, phone 800/228-0810, fax 800/772-9165. The cost of the manual is $79.95, plus appropriate state sales tax and $7.00 shipping for the first manual and $.50 for each subsequent copy in the same order. The *Manual* also is available online at NASDTEC's Web site at **www.nasdtec.org**.



Teacher Certification Publications

A much more compact and still comprehensive compilation of teacher certification requirements is the manual, *Teacher Certification Requirements in All Fifty States*, by Joel E. Boydston of Teacher Certification Publications. The current edition, which runs to 158 pages, is for 2001-02, and the 2002-03 edition—the twentieth—will ship in September 2002.

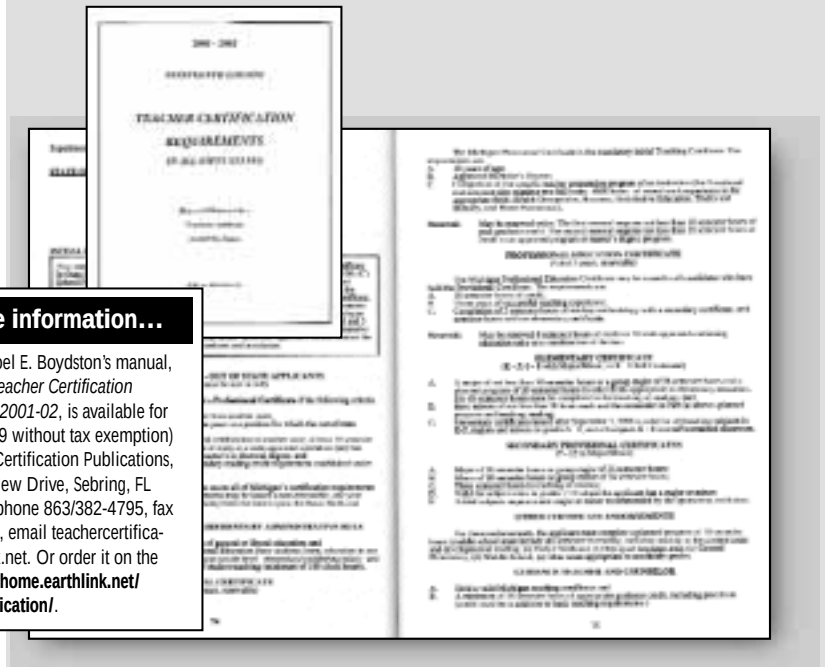
Teacher Certification Requirements 2001-02 presents the requirements for obtaining a teaching certificate in the 50 states and the District of Columbia, effective July 1, 2001. The requirements in the manual are derived from information supplied by the certification offices of each state and the District of Columbia, plus information from other organizations such as NASDTEC. Boydston's manual attempts to reduce each state's official written regulations from their formal legal language to a synopsis that is clear and concise.

Boydston's manual is designed not only for educators who may be applying for certification in other states, but also as a reference book for libraries, colleges, and placement offices. He points out it is not unusual for several states to make significant changes to their certification requirements each year, with over 30 states making major or minor changes in their requirements this year. Some changes were as simple as the state joining the Interstate Certification Compact or raising fees, while others involved a complete rewrite of their regulations.

"The use of testing prior to acceptance in an education program at a college or university has become nearly universal," says Boydston, noting many states have their own certification test or require taking Praxis pre-professional and subject area tests prior to issuing a teaching certificate.

For more information…

WWW Joel E. Boydston's manual, *Teacher Certification Requirements 2001-02*, is available for $27.00 ($28.89 without tax exemption) from Teacher Certification Publications, 603 NE Lakeview Drive, Sebring, FL 33870-7008; phone 863/382-4795, fax 863/382-7136, email teachercertification@earthlink.net. Or order it on the Web at **http://home.earthlink.net/~teachercertification/**.



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Journal, St. Bernard's School

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